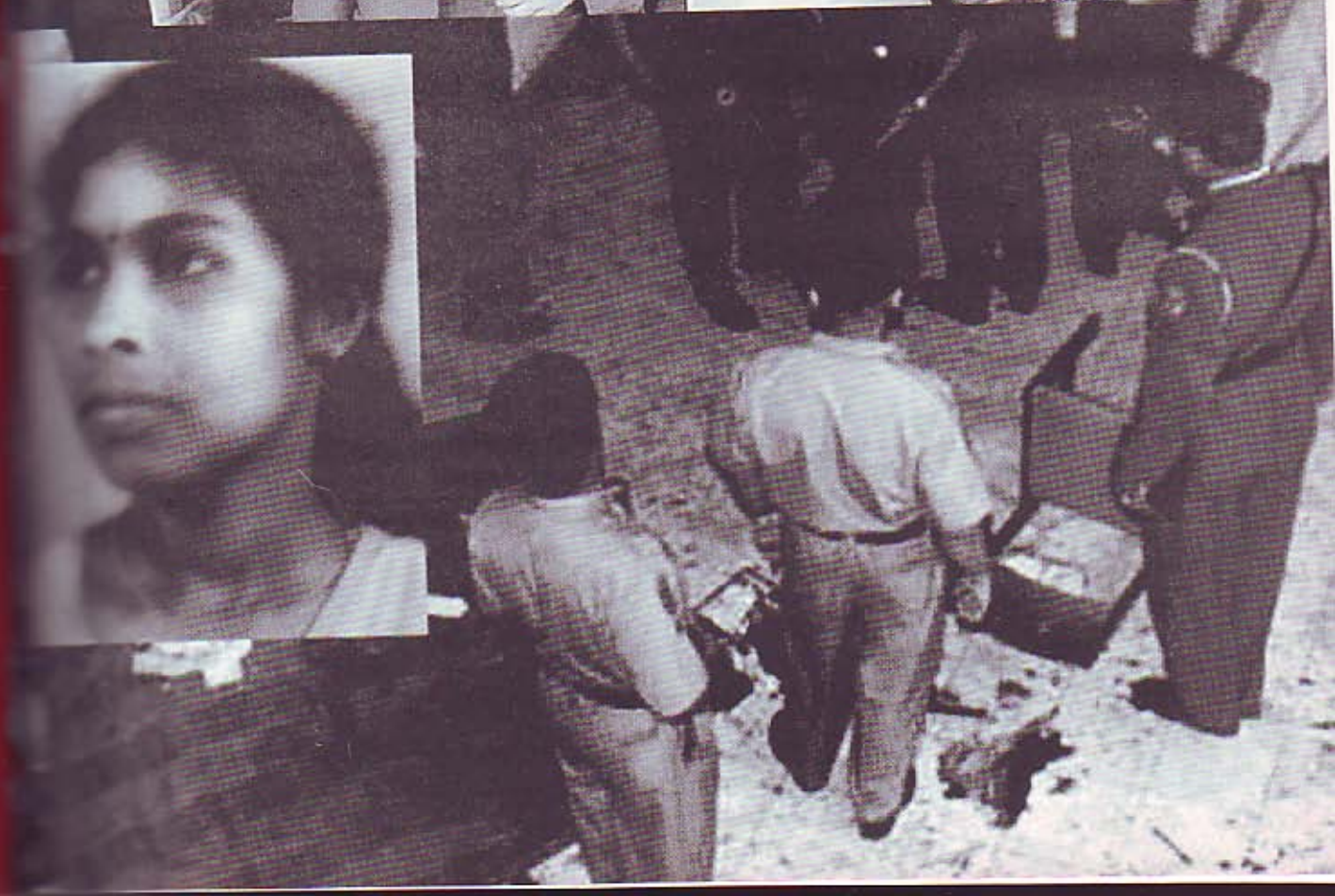
Tamil TIMES

VOL XXIII No.6 ISSN 0266-4488 JULY 2004 90p

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

UK/India/Sri Lanka	£15/US$25
Australia (Australian Bank cheques only)	Aus$45
USA	US$35
Canada	Can$40
All other countries	£20/US$35



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Tamil TIMES

ISSN 0266 – 44 88
Vol. XXIII No.7
JULY 2004

Published by:
TAMIL TIMES LTD
PO Box 121, Sutton,
Surrey SM1 3TD
United Kingdom
Phone: 020 – 8644 0972
Fax: 020 – 8241 4557

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All other countries.....£20.US$35

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COVER: Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar visiting Kilinochi to meet LTTE's Thamilchelvan (top left); Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse with Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram during visit to India (top right); Scene of bomb blast in Colombo police station with photo of the suicide bomber Thiyagarajah Jeyarani -inset (bottom)

War is not the alternative

The peace process remains stuck in its track. The return of the Norwegian facilitators initially showed positive signs about the prospect of the peace process being resuscitated and peace talks between the Government and the LTTE being resumed.

It appeared that the only obstacle to the resumption of talks was the dispute whether, as the LTTE insisted, the discussions should be confined to its proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) for the Northeast, or whether, as the Government asserted, such discussions should at the same time be linked to discussing the parameters for a final settlement. However, as recent developments have shown, many other factors have begun to emerge that have helped to create a situation that is not conducive to taking the peace process forward so much so many are led to the belief that peace talks are unlikely to be resumed in the near future.

One factor is that the Government installed after the April general election has failed to muster a working majority in parliament. Its attempts to woo and tempt some minority parties now sitting in the opposition to join the Government have so far proved unsuccessful President Kumaratunga has to rely on the JVP to sustain the Government, but the JVP's rigid stance on the issue of resuming peace talks with the LTTE remains obstructive to say the least. At the same time the Government is confronted in parliament by a hostile group of opposition parties determined unwilling provide the needed support to take the peace process forward.

The LTTE leadership is also confronted with the worsening situation in the east of country with the "Karuna factor" re-emerging as an issue of aggravated controversy. As the LTTE is determined to take whatever steps that are required to eliminate the challenge to its dominant position by the remnants of the Karuna faction, the spate of killings and counter-killings continue as the people are gripped by an all pervasive sense of tension and fear. Unable to do their work, journalists and university teachers are reported to be seeking to flee the area.

In this backdrop, the LTTE leadership has charged that the military intelligence and the security forces are engaged in a proxy war against the LTTE by providing clandestine backing to Karuna and his loyalists, and issued dire warnings about returning to war if such support is continued.

In the meantime, the ceasfire which has held since February 2002 has been subjected to severe strain and if matters are allowed to drift, then there is the tragic prospect that the ceasefire will breakdown and the country will plunge into a situation of war again.

Though a final political solution to the long-running ethnic conflict is yet to be discussed and arrived at, the ceasefire has mercifully provided a tranquil atmosphere in the whole country. It has benefited all communities, the Government, the LTTE and the whole country. Hundreds of thousands of displaced people have returned to their homes. The Northeast is witnessing a resurgence through rehabilitation, reconstruction and new development work that is transforming its landscape and the lives its people.

Peace-making, particularly in the context of years of conflict, is difficult and often confronted with obstacles. War is not the only alternative nor is it inevitable.

Sadly it seems that some commentators find it easy to already write and talk about war clouds gathering in the Northeastern horizon. But what is certain is that if there is a return to war, it won't be confined to the Northeast. It would envelop the whole country. A horrendous example of it was provided on Wednesday, 7 July, in Colombo with the return of the suicide bomber in a bid to assassinate the EPDP leader sending shockwaves across an otherwise tranquil capital.

News Review

The peace process remains stalled despite strenuous efforts on the part of the Norwegian facilitators. The 'Karuna factor', the tense situation in the east of country with frequent killings and counter-killings and the assassination bid against the EPDP leader and cabinet minister Douglas Devananda have further complicated matters which have led to the belief that peace talks between the government and the LTTE are unlikely to be resumed in the near future. The ceasefire agreement has been put under severe strain by recent developments.

In the meantime, it has been announced from the Presidential Secretariat that an all party consultative committee called the "National Advisory Council on Peace and Reconciliation" is to be established. The proposed advisory council will be a national forum of various political, religious and civil society leaders. The main task of this Council will be to discuss, formulate ideas and positions on the peace process and communicate them to the negotiators. It is said that the President would shortly meet Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe to discuss the formation of this national advisory forum. It is hoped that the National Advisory Council will be the forum on the peace process open to diverse political opinion that would perhaps be the best place to reach a wider national consensus on the National Question.

A "National Council for Peace", chaired by the President herself, is also to be set up that would act as an apex body that will coordinate all institutions dealing with peace.

The Government's Peace Secretariat headed now by Jayantha Dhanapa is busy, 'informally' consulting civil society leaders on this issue and three meetings have been held with civil society and business representatives.

The Karuna factor

Though the Government is making these peace initiatives, they come at a time of aggravated controversy resulting from the re-emergence of the "Karuna factor" as primary source of dispute.

Karuna after a silence of three months surfaced recently in the media, when he gave an interview to the the BBC Tamil Service and relayed over the state owned SLBC Tamil Service. He said that he wanted to enter the political democratic mainstream and form a political party. His loyalists in the East launched a poster campaign condemning the Tiger Chief Prabhakaran, the LTTE, and their conduct. A columnist says that Karuna supporters have been distributing leaflets discouraging potential cadres from joining the LTTE. When government servants and businessmen were asked to report to Kokkadicholai and pay taxes, Karuna supporters approached them thereafter and demanded the same. The competition has apparently reduced tax collection to a minimum according to truce monitors.

The EPDP leader Douglas Devananda revealed in interviews to newspapers that he was in contact with and helping Karuna to form his own political party.

The government came in for severe attack from the LTTE's Head of the political division for Batticaloa, Mr. E Kousalyan, for "openly promoting" Karuna by "providing him state radio facilities to attack the Tigers with the obvious aim of destroying the mutual goodwill on which the cease fire is based."

Mr. Kousalyan was reacting to a BBC Tamil Service interview with the renegade commander broadcast on the state run radio on 11 July. "The truth is out today beyond any doubt that the Sri Lankan state is providing him state facilities to wage a proxy war of black propaganda against the LTTE and to carry out terrorist attacks with the assistance Sri Lankan military intelligence to derail the cease fire," he said. "The Sri Lankan state's aims are now very obvious to us. It is now openly exploiting Karuna in the hope of weakening the LTTE. This would make it plain to the Tamil people that the Sri Lankan state is not interested at all in taking forward the peace process but is only bent on using the talks and the ceasefire to wage a terrorist war on us in the baseless hope of weakening us militarily and politically," Mr. Kousalyan said. "We are ready to face the war that the Sri Lankan state has decided thrust on us thus," he emphasised.

An angered LTTE charged that the security forces have been conniving with and secretly assisting its rebel eastern commander, Col. Karuna and his loyalists. Speaking to Asia Today on BBC World, Mr Thamilchelvan, the political chief of the LTTE, charged that the government and its security forces were "trying to shatter the confidence and the hope that had been built over the last two and a half years". He accused the security forces and the government of harbouring Karuna and his forces which he said were instrumental in killing LTTE cadres in the east. He said the LTTE was loosing its cadres during peace times, adding "it makes us feel that we are drifting back to war". LTTE Trincomalee political leader Elinan raised the stakes by saying that "the Tigers are ready to face a war if it is thrust on us".

Even as the LTTE was busy commemorating its Black Tiger day on July 5, suspected Karuna supporters shot dead two prominent LTTE political wing officers in two separate shooting incidents in Batticaloa triggering off a bout of killing and counter-killing between the two factions. Ramalingam Padmaseelan alias Lt. Col. Senathiraja, LTTE's political division head for Batticaloa was shot at the busy Arasadi Junction while he was riding a motorbike with a colleague, Nilan, who was also injured. Mr. Senathy received three gunshot wounds, and later succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday, July 13. In the other incident on the same day, two cadres of the LTTE, identified as Murinchan and Rosan while they were riding a motorbike, were shot allegedly by Karuna loyalists at Vanthaarumoolai north of Batticaloa. Murinchan was killed and Rosan was admitted to hospital with serious injuries. The victim was identified Iswaran (37) of Hospital Road, Sandiliveli.

Following these incidents, a press release issued by the LTTE's Political Division of Batticaloa-Amparai, warned "Once more, fully aware of our people's desire for peace, we emphasise our continued commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding. We also want to express in no uncertain terms that if war is thrust on us, we are prepared to respond."

On July 14, the day of Senathiraja's funeral, the LTTE in Batticaloa said that a key associate of Karuna was killed in an ambush by one of their special jungle warfare units in Batticaloa. On the day following, 15 July, the Tigers in carrying out a daring operation inside the Batticaloa prison killing two key Karuna loyalists. One of them was "Satchi Master" Tigers had earlier charged that Satchi Master was acting as Karuna's spokesman from his prison cell under the name 'Maran' with connivance of the Sri Lankan military intelligence.

The death of Satchi Master, who was tipped to be the General Secretary of Karuna's proposed new political party and who spoke to the media under the pseudonym Maran, is said to have dealt a serious blow to the Karuna faction which was expected to register

its political party - Democratic-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam – shortly. An EPDP spokesman said the registration work had been postponed after the death of Satchi Master.

If there was any doubt about Karuna's connection with the Sri Lankan security forces, that was dispelled when a senior associate of Karuna disclosed at a press conference organized by the LTTE that she and other associates of Karuna stayed in a house provided and protected by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in a suburb of Colombo. Ms. Nilavini (Charlie), described by the LTTE as the former commander of the LTTE women's fighting formations in the Batticaloa-Amparai district who rejoined the Tigers on Friday 18 June, spoke to the press about Karuna's contacts with the SLA since he fled Batticaloa on 11 April.

Three of her female colleagues who also returned to the LTTE were also present at the press briefing. She said that a high ranking official regularly visited Karuna for discussions at the SLA safe-house in Colombo. According to Nilavini, it was UNP national list MP, Mr. Ali Zahir Moulana Seyed who took Karuna and his associates personally in his own vehicle to Colombo when the renegade commander fled Batticaloa. The revelation of the involvement of Mr Moulana in Karuna's escape from Batticaloa made it inevitable that he resigned as MP to avoid embarrassment to the UNP leadership.

Then there was the report about the arrest of fourteen young Tamil persons from a Buddhist temple in the village of Bubula in Hingurakgoda in the Pollannaruwa District on Monday, 5 July. The Police also recovered three T- 56, three T - 84 type assault rifles, a T - 81 special assault rifle and six hand grenades from the temple. A van and a car in which they had traveled were also seized from the Bubula temple, Police said. Reports from the east linked the arrested men with the LTTE's breakaway Karuna group. However, on the following day the suspects were produced before the Magistrate and quickly released on bail.

"Now it is very obvious that the Sri Lankan authorities are conniving with their military intelligence and Police to gather, arm and send stragglers of the Karuna group to murder innocents and sabotage the peace," the political head of the LTTE in Batticaloa was quoted as saying.

Some media reports said that the chief monk of the Bubula temple (Bodhirukkarama Vihara) was a candidate of the JHU in the Polannaruwa District at the elections to Parliament in April this year, and that he is a member of Jathika Hela Urumaya(JHU), the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist party. Polannaruwa borders the Batticaloa District. The Bubula monk had reportedly told Police that the Tamil youth were bound for the east but that he was unaware that they were armed. The monk had reportedly claimed that the youth were sent to him by the JHU headquarters in Colombo, Police sources said. The Chief monk was later killed in his own temple in a grenade attack.

Then came the shocking incident in Colombo which showed that very little has changed in the methods used by the LTTE in fighting against its perceived enemies. A woman suicide bomber who was on a mission to assassinate EPDP leader and cabinet Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda exploded herself killing four police officers when she was to be subjected to a body check in the Kollupitya Police station on 7 July. The Kollupitya Police Station is located in the heart of the Colombo city next to the Prime Minister's official residence "Temple Trees", and not very far from Devananda's Ministry office. Police said the alleged woman suicide bomber was taken into to custody in front of the office of Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda on suspicion. She was immediately taken to Kollupitya Police Station for investigation. When she was about to be body-searched she triggered the explosive device attached to a jacket packed with explosives killing herself and four police officers and injuring 12 others in the Kollupitya Police Station. Among the injured were two civilians and the others were police officers. Bomb blast had caused severe damage to the Kollupitya Police Station, security officials said.

Police said its initial investigation revealed that the woman had gone to ministry office to see Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda. She was not allowed to meet the Minister when she refused to be body-searched by the security personnel.

Though Thamilchelvan in a statement issued on 8 July said that the Tigers had "absolutely no connection in the suicide bombing in Colombo". "This is an act to destabilize the peace process. We suspect this has been carried out by elements that want to disrupt the peace process", Mr. Thamilchelvan said. However, very few believed Tiger denial and the US Ambassador in Colombo condemned the suicide assassination bid describing it as having all the hallmarks of an LTTE operation

Two days later on 9 July, the LTTE issued a statement that two militants belonging to the Karuna group were publicly executed by the Liberation Tigers in Illupadichchenai in Batticaloa. Balasundaram Sritharan (23) and Thillaiampalam Suthanthirarajan were arrested earlier on suspicion of carrying out attacks on LTTE members and supporters in the east. The statement alleged that they were captured with weapons and equipment supplied by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA).

On the same day, unidentified gunmen shot dead a village officer (Grama Sevaka) in Kalladi Uppodai, on the southern outskirts of Batticaloa town. Mr. Kunjithamby Sivarasa, 47, was killed at his home around 5.30 p.m. by two gunmen who came on motorbike, Police said. Mr. Sivarasa was the village officer for Karadiyanaaru in the LTTE controlled hinterland of the Batticaloa District. According to local sources, he was killed on suspicion that he was a Karuna loyalist.

There is no doubt that the 'Karuna factor' and the situation in the east are certainly dominating the minds of the LTTE leadership. It wants the Sri Lankan government to disarm and neutralize the Karuna faction or give a free hand to the LTTE deal with it militarily.

At a lengthy meeting on 17 July, the LTTE told TNA MPs and politicians based in the East to launch a counter campaign against renegade leader Karuna who is set to form his own political party. LTTE Political Wing leader, S.P.Thamilselvan told the eight TNA MPs from the East and others during a meeting in Kilinochchi that they should carryout a political campaign to ensure the LTTE is recognised as the sole representative of the Tamil people.

Batticaloa - Ampara military wing leader, Ramesh and Political wing leader Kaushalyan also attended the three-hour meeting at which they discussed the current security situation.

Mr. Thamilselvan reportedly said that the people had given a mandate to the TNA members to carryout the policies of the LTTE and therefore they should get closer to the eastern people who had been distanced due to the presence of Karuna loyalists. He had said that due to Karuna's activities the people in the east were concerned about their security and the LTTE needed to reassure the people. He told the MPs to speak out in parliament and elsewhere against the activities of the Karuna group.

Mr. Thamilslevan's comments came amidst growing concern by the LTTE that Karuna's group was strengthening its position in the east with the help of the army.

The continuing incidents and tension in the East have prompted the Scandinavian monitors to write to both, the government and the LTTE that the recent incidents could jeopardise

the cease-fire agreement.

Victory for UPFA in PC polls

The governing United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) emerged victorious at the election held on 10 July, by winning all six provincial councils, namely: Western, Southern, Central, North Central, Uva and Sabaragamuwa. The only district in which the United National Party (UNP) managed to secure a majority of votes was in the Nuwara-Eliya district, thanks to the vote-bank of the Ceylon Workers Congress.

The final results are as follow: The UPFA Secured 59 seats in the western provincial council. While the UNP got 39, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress obtained four seats. The Western Development Front and Democratic Unity Alliance secured one seat each for the Western province. UPFA secured 36 councillors and the UNP 19 councillors to the Southern Provincial Council. Twenty-one members of the Alliance have been elected to the Uva provincial council while UNP received only 12 seats. The Up-country Peoples Front secured a single seat for the Uva province. Twenty-eight members of the UPFA were elected to the Sabaragamuwa provincial council, UNP secured only 15 seats, while one member from the Ceylon Workers Congress got one seat. Twenty-two members of the Freedom Alliance have been elected to the North Central Provincial Council, the UNP secured 10 seats and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress obtained one seat. For the Central province the Alliance won 30 seats and UNP received 26 seats and the Up country Peoples Front has secured one seat.A total of 4134 candidates from 23 recognised political parties and 35 independent groups were in the fray vying for slots in the Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Central, North Central and Uva Provincial Councils. Voting took place in 7,663 polling centres attended by nearly 150,000 staff in six Provinces with over 20,000 policemen deployed apart from mobile police units, to ensure a violence free poll. By Sri Lankan standards, the poll was relatively free and fair according to observers. According to Deputy Elections Commissioner K. Senanayake, a total of 9,581,331 registered voters were eligible to cast their vote at the polls. However, in most of the areas, less than 50 percent of the electors cast their votes, which is a low turnout by Sri Lankan standards set during previous elections.

Opposition to federal structure

Meanwhile, members of the Sinhala Jathika Sangamaya (JSS), which is known to to represent the Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist point of view, declared recently that a federal structure to resolve the ethnic conflict was a stalking horse of the LTTE for a separate state, and blamed both the former UNF government and the present UPFA regime for their readiness to concede a federal structure and of being accommodative to LTTE demands.

The JSS has asserted that since the government has not got a mandate to hand over a the Northeast to the LTTE to be administered separately, the statements made by the government that the LTTE's ISGA could be a base for discussion was null and void.

These views were articulated when a report titled 'A case against a federal constitution for Sri Lanka' was launched on 15 July at a largely attended JSS conference held in Colombo where several comments on the Sri Lankan ethnic issue were made by the speakers present.

"The ISGA proposals of the LTTE have been declared as a blueprint for a separate state by no other party than this present government. However the roar has now become a sniffling and this very same government is stating that it is willing to speak to the LTTE on the ISGA", said attorney-at-law and President of the Sinhala Jathika Sangamaya, S. L. Gunasekera in his keynote address. He further warned that if the ISGA was approved it would mean that the government military will have to seek permission from the LTTE to continue its camps in the North and East.

The administration carried out by the LTTE at present in the North and East of the country with a separate legal structure and police force was also commented upon with the prediction by Mr. Gunasekera that the LTTE will not be satisfied with nothing less than a separate state.

Monks to talk to Tigers

In the meantime, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU), the party of Buddhist monks, is reported to be considering a proposal to negotiate with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A JHU spokesman is quoted as saying that the proposal to talk with the LTTE is at discussion level and has to be brokered through a Sinhala speaking top-brass official of the LTTE. He believed that the opinion of the Sinhala masses has not been projected accurately to the LTTE. The JHU is expecting to discuss with the LTTE on how to continue the peace process.

The JHU's previously stated view is that the peace talks should be carried forward on the Mandela Model where President Nelson Mandela of South Africa carried on the peace process by involving all relevant parties. It also has said that talks should include other Tamil parties from the North and opposition parties from the South as well for a viable peace process and for a permanent settlement to the North-East issue.

The JHU rejects the ongoing peace process as it alleges that it will facilitate the division of the country and said that the parties were not sincere with each other. It said that it promoted a process where all parties should sit at the negotiation table and said the negotiations up to now were only between the Government and the LTTE.

The JHU has also serious doubts about the impartiality of Norway as the facilitator for the negotiations.

Govt still has no majority

Despite long lapse of time since the April election and in spite of subsequent strenuous efforts by the UPFA government, it has so far failed to get an overall majority in parliament. Behind the scene maneuvers and meetings with minority parties represented in parliament have so far proved unsuccessful.

The recently held Provincial Council election no doubt established the fact that the governing coalition has greater support in the country than the opposition parties represented in parliament. The UPFA captured power in all the Provincial Councils performing much better than in the general election held in April this year. However, this victory has not had the effect of changing the situation in parliament where the opposition parties command a majority.

Had the government agreed to the demand of the LTTE that any resumed peace talks should deal with "institutionalizing" its proposal for an Interim Self Governing Authority (ISGA) for the Northeast, then the support in parliament from the LTTE's 22 Tamil National Alliance (TNA) Members of Parliament would have been assured providing a secure majority for the government in parliament. But with the peace process remaining stalled with no signs for early resumption, the government remains deprived of any support from the TNA MPs.

The manner in which parliamentarians belonging to the government treated the monk MPs of the JHU had forced it to gang up with the other parties of the opposition. The involvement of some governing party leading personalities who figured in the orchestrated allegations against Rauf Hakeem, the leader of the

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Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, concerning his alleged questionable association with a named woman had pushed the SLMC also to adopt a position of hostility to the government.

CWC playing hard to get

The only hope for the government is to win over the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) led by S Thondaman. The CWC, which contested the last general election having entered a pact with the UNP, has 7 parliamentarians now sitting in the opposition. Winning the CWC over with their 7 votes will take the governing party's strength from 107 to 114, a bare majority in the 225 seat House. With the support of 3 dissident SLMC MPs, who stand sacked from the party, the tally will reach 117 to provide a working majority to the government. It would seem therefore the support of the CWC is critical for the government.

There have been several rounds of talks between government leaders and the CWC leadership, but so far the support from the CWC remains elusive. As far as the CWC is concerned, there cannot be any principled or ideological objection in supporting the government. It has a history of aligning with both the UNP and SLFP occupying cabinet positions when either party was in power. However, this time round, the CWC has been withholding its position reportedly for several reasons. The first is that there are differences of opinion among leading figures in the party about a tie-up with the government at this stage, one section deeply committed to a continuing alliance with the UNP. While some argue that without political power that comes with being part of the government the party cannot look after the interest of its core supporters, others pointing to the unstable nature of the coalition between the SLFP and the JVP, and a wrong turn at this stage could be detrimental to the long-term interests of the party. While most in the CWC leadership would not be averse to be in a front with the SLFP, many are unhappy with its alliance with the JVP. "We have supported governments in the past, but we are not sure whether we could do the same with this Government, because of the JVP's negative attitude about the peace process," M S Sellasamy, National List MP and a leading figure of the party, is quoted as saying.

It is also understood that in return for its support, the CWC is demanding "too much" in terms of cabinet portfolios and other positions which the UPFA finds to exorbitant a price to pay.

A recent meeting of the CWC leadership, having discussed all the pros and cons, is reported to have entrusted the responsibility of taking final decision as to whether to join the the government or not to the party leader, Mr A Thondaman.

CWC vs TNA

A rather unusual dispute has arisen between the CWC and the Tamil National Alliance.

In an interview with the *Sunday Leader*, the Administrative Secretary of CWC, V.Puthrasigamany, has warned the northern based political parties and the TNA MPs that they should not get involved in the politics of the hill country. Blasting TNA MP, Eelavanthan, Puthrasigamany said Eelavanthan's attempts to address meetings in the plantation sector and attempts to make Chandrasekaran (leader of the Upcountry Peoples United Front) a hero would lead to a souring of relations between the TNA and CWC. "We have respected the northern parties and left them alone. In fact it is our late leader who suggested that the northeast must be given to the LTTE for five years without any condition.

So we do not like to see northern politicians trying to do politics in the plantation sector. This would lead to unwanted problems."

Asking the TNA MPs to keep out of the plantation sector, Puthrasigamany said that "in 1947, when the Citizenship Bill came up some of the northern politicians supported this. And the government went ahead and passed the bill. As a result we lost eight members who were in parliament. Our people lost citizenship rights and in the subsequent elections we could not contest. Now we have eight seats in parliament.

We are worried whether the TNA could weaken our positions by getting involved in our politics. As we have left them alone to their politics they too should leave us alone."

The involvement in the politics of the hill country by these parties "would weaken the position of the CWC and other up country political parties. The TNA is trying to support the Up Country People's Front led by Chandrasekaran and trying to call him the sole representative of the Tamils in the hill country. I think this could create a division among parties. TNA MP Eelavanthan has compared Pirapaharan to Chandrasekaran. I think Eelavanthan is talking through his hat," Puthrasigamany said.

"Supposing war erupts, the plantation youth are going to either be drawn into the war or get harassed by the police on suspicion. And at this juncture it is not Chandrasekaran who will come to their rescue. But it is the CWC that has to move forward. So I think this must stop now right here," he added. Accusing Mr Chandrasekaran of bankruptcy, Puthrasigamany said. "His connection with the north and east or his survival is now in the hands of northeast parties. He takes instructions from northeast for his survival. This is also due to bankruptcy."

Asked as to whether he was o the opinion the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are the sole representatives of the Tamils in Sri Lanka that also includes the citizens of Indian origin, Puthrasigamany said, "No. People living under the CWC continue to consider CWC as their sole representative. They consider Thondaman as their saviour. The late Thondaman was a charismatic leader and in fact was also described as 'local Gandhi.' He, as a matter of fact, was instrumental in bringing the plantation workers out of their misery. And his grandson Arumugam is following this and the people have not only accepted his leadership but also have endorsed it. So there are no qualms about this as far as the workers are concerned. Even other plantation leaders have led the workers in the path they should travel and we have never sought help from other political parties. We can stand independently."

JVP to lobby on ISGA

The once 'anti-imperialist' Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), a partner in the ruling coalition, is said to storm the bastions of American and Western imperialism in Colombo, not with demonstrations or pickets as it did in the years gone by, but by making friendly or rather comradely diplomatic visits.

The JVP has announced that it wants to present its position on the LTTE's interim self-government administration (ISGA) proposal to the US, European Union and Indian diplomats in Colombo.

"We are hoping to meet their Colombo based representatives beginning this week," According to JVP frontliner Wimal Weerawansa, it is essential for his party meet the diplomatic representatives of these countries and explain the implications of the ISGA proposal and also to clarify why the JVP is against resuming peace talks with the LTTE based on the ISGA..

The JVP takes the view that the ISGA is the LTTE's blueprint for a separate state and stands opposed to resuming peace talks on the basis of the ISGA as demanded by the LTTE.

Weerawansa says that it is important to keep the international community informed of their thinking. He pointed out that the co-chairs of the donor community which met in Brussels recently had stressed that a negotiated settlement could be sustained only by respecting the legitimate rights of all ethnic groups, preserving the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and based on the principle of democracy and human rights. "The ISGA then in its present form should have no place in the order of things. It is the main obstacle to the ongoing efforts to resume talks," he says.

In Parliament

Though media reports predicted stormy scenes among MPs when the Parliament reconvened on 20 July after a long adjournment, the sittings commenced and continued on the following days without any untoward incident.

At the request of the Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians, a debate on the proposed Interim Self Governing Authority of the LTTE had been scheduled for the day, but the party leaders who met at the Parliamentary complex had decided to postpone the debate on proposed ISGA until the end of August again at the request of the TNA MPs.

LTTE's persona non grata and rebel commander Karuna did not fail to figure in one of the exchanges. Minister D M Jayaratne was asked whether the Government was willing to oblige the demand made by Tamil National Alliance MP M. K. Sivajilingam who had told "The Island" newspaper that TNA's 22 Members of Parliament would support the UPFA government thereby providing it with a comfortable majority in parliament if it did not support Karuna and his rebel faction. The Minister responded by saying the government was not supporting Karuna though the LTTE repeatedly making this claim. Resuming peace talks with a view to achieving permanent peace was on top of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's agenda, the Minister assured.

Asked to explain the connection between Col. Karuna and EPDP leader and Minister Douglas Devananda, Minister Jayaratne said that though Devananda was a minister of the UPFA government he represented another party. "Everybody has the right to express his views. Supporting Karuna may be Devananda's stand". But "Devananda was not the sole representative of the government," he said.

But what provoked many MPs was that during a discussion on media reform, TNA parliamentarian, K. Gajendran made a rather inflammatory statement which made many MPs from all parties rising on their feet. The TNA MP had said that in the event of a war breaking out, the 22,000 soldiers stationed in government - controlled areas beyond Mannar would have to be flown home in coffins. The statement had the entire government benchers on their feet with the Leader of the House Maithripala Sirisena expressing the protest of the government against the statement.

The Jathika Hela Urumaya Parliamentary Group Leader Ven. Athuraliye Rathana too expressed the strong protest of the JHU questioning the appropriateness of the statement by a Member of Parliament who had pledged to uphold the territorial integrity of the country. Ratana Thera said that as MPs who took oaths to protect democracy in the country they could not make statements inconsistent with democratic principles in this House. "They cannot represent any other organisation in this House. they should act according to the traditions of the House and according to the Constitution," Ratana Thera added. He threatened that if MPs from the opposition were to conduct in this way and make such statements in the future, the JHU would consider supporting the Government,

UNF MP, Mano Wijeratne expressed his protest against the MPs statement that he was speaking in a lion's den, and stressed that the parliament was ""no one's den".

The Speaker ordered that the statement by MP Gajendran be expunged from the hanzard.

'Karuna stayed at army safehouse'

June 21 - A senior associate of the renegade LTTE commander Mr. Vinayagamoorthy Muraleetharan (Karuna) said today that she and other associates of Karuna stayed in a house provided and protected by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) in a suburb of Colombo. Ms. Nilavini (Charlie), formerly the commander of the LTTE womens' fighting formations in the Batticaloa-Amparai district who rejoined the Tigers on Friday 18 June spoke to the press about the renegade LTTE commander's activities with the SLA since he fled Batticaloa on 11 April.

Three of her female colleagues who also returned to the LTTE were also present at the press meet in the LTTE conference centre Solayakam, about 18 km southwest of Batticaloa. She said that a high ranking official regularly visited Karuna for discussions at the SLA safehouse in Colombo. According to Nilavini, UNP national list MP, Mr. Ali Zahir Moulana Seyed took Karuna and his associates personally in his own vehicle to Colombo when the renegade commander fled Batticaloa.

"We were first put up at the Colombo Hilton Hotel for 3 days. Thereafter we (including Karuna) stayed in a safehouse somewhere in Colombo for 7-8 days. Later, we were moved to another house by the SLA intelligence from which we could see the Apollo Hospital." said Nilavini. "Varathan was also with us", she added.

The Apollo Hospital is situated in the Colombo suburb of Narehenpita. The SLA has a camp in this area. Nilavini said on 13th June Karuna had told them that he was going abroad with his family and left the safehouse the same day in a SLA vehicle. She said that following Karuna's departure she made a call to a relative in Batticaloa and escaped to the East with his help. She said her escape was possible because SLA security at the safehouse was lax after the renegade commander's departure.

US will continue LTTE ban

June 22 -The United States said it would not remove the terrorist tag from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) even though it had observed a ceasefire for more than two years and conducted informal peace talks with the Government.

"We will not remove our designation of the LTTE as a terrorist organisation until it has firmly and decidedly given up terrorism and such policies as the recruitment of children as soldiers," Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca said.

Rocca, who is in charge of South Asian affairs, told a congressional hearing that she did not expect peace talks to resume before August even though the Norwegian Government played a "heroic role" in mediations between the Government and the LTTE. "We are hopeful that they will start sometime soon, because there definitely is the will on the part of the Government to move forward on this" she added.

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga has agreed to discuss a LTTE plan for interim self-rule only if the negotiations also focus on reaching a final settlement to the three-decade conflict, a condition rejected by the Tigers. Rocca said although the Government was willing to negotiate, "they don't want to create a de facto separate state going into the negotiations."

At the hearing, Illinois Republican Representative Jerry Weller had asked the State Department official when she expected the Tigers to be taken off the US list of international terrorist organisations. Rocca was also asked whether such a move would be an inducement for the Tigers to participate in productive peace negotiations.

"We look forward to the day when the LTTE will take the steps necessary to get off the foreign terrorist organisations list.At the moment there are no plans to take them off," she said. She charged that the Tigers continued to recruit child soldiers, stockpiled weapons and conducted extrajudicial assassinations of politicians who disagreed with them. "They are continuing to stockpile weapons. They will need to renounce terrorism in word and in deed in order to be taken off the list," Rocca said.

$64m World Bank funding for Northeast

June 23 - North-East Irrigated Agriculture Project (NEIAP) is to get an additional $64.7m credit from the Worldbank for rehabilitation work and to bring normalcy to conflict affected communities of North East Sri Lanka, a report released by World Bank said.

"To sustain the peace process, it is vital that the people of the North East should be assisted to rebuild their social networks and livelihoods. The first project supported this objective even as the conflict was raging, and this follow-on expanded operation will deepen the process," says Peter Harrold, World Bank Country Director for Sri Lanka. "We sincerely hope that a successful implementation of this project will contribute significantly to assist Sri Lanka to move towards a permanent peace," he added.

The report quoted Nihal Fernando, a Senior Irrigation Engineer saying, "The first project pioneered international development assistance to the North-East. Approximately 50,000 households and 250,000 people in about 380 villages benefited during the last four years." He added that as a result "many thousands more people who have been affected by conflict are now ready and eager to work with this program, and we are looking forward to bringing its benefits to even more villages than in the first phase."

The proposed project would be implemented over a period of six years commencing from January 2005. The International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's concessionary lending affiliate, is providing the US$64.7 million credit to the government of Sri Lanka on standard IDA terms, with 40 years maturity and a ten-year grace period, according to the report.

Robberies of luxury vehicles

June 27 - The anti-Crime Unit at Police Headquarters has detailed four teams to investigate robbed or stolen Pajero and Prado luxury vehicles from the south and then smuggled across to LTTE controlled areas following the arrest of two persons at Gampaha recently.

In recent times, there were 24 complaints of theft of luxury vehicles from the Western Province. But none of them has been traced so far. Police suspect these vehicles might have ended up in LTTE controlled territory during the past few months.

The anti-Crime unit at Police Headquarters which functions under DIG (Crimes) Jayantha Wickremaratne and SSP, Alfred Wijewardena and headed by Chief Inspector H. Samudrajeewa was able to unearth valuable clues regarding this vehicle racket. On receipt of information, Chief Inspector Samudrajeewa arrested two persons involved in the robbery of a Pajero worth Rs. 20 million from a businessman at Maharagama this year. They had also confessed that a number of stolen vehicles have been sold to certain persons in the LTTE controlled areas.

Earlier, the police arrested two persons known as "Dolphin Brothers" involved in a series of vehicle robberies. Vehicles such as Mitsubishi Pajero Inter-coolers, Toyota Prado Land Cruisers have been taken into Wanni areas before. Police say they do not have access to LTTE controlled areas to conduct investigations.

According to Police Headquarters, the following vehicles have been robbed or stolen from January to October last year: 501

motorcycles, 211 three-wheeler taxis, 25 cars, 140 vans, 3 buses, 40 lorries, 9 Jeeps. In addition 60-70 vehicles have been stolen during the month of October.

LTTE sets up paid auxiliary force

June 27 - The LTTE has begun an intensified campaign of recruiting new cadres to its ranks, but with a difference. They are to be paid. The LTTE never openly recruited cadres, but during the past few weeks, they have made several public proclamations calling for new recruits, specially youth to join its movement. In its newspaper announcements, the LTTE is promising to pay a monthly salary of Rs.8500/- to each new cadre.

For the first time the LTTE placed a formal advertisement in newspapers inviting applicants to join the newly established auxiliary force where the applicants will be given a six-month armed training. Some observers have commented that the move was aimed at strengthening the depleted forces of the LTTE after being hit by a large number of desertions from the movement following the departure of renegade LTTE's Batticaloa-Ampara leader Karuna who has also discouraged new cadres joining the movement.

It is said that the aim is to raise a 1,500 strong auxiliary force that will form part of an armed militia of the LTTE. This is the first time the LTTE is setting up an auxiliary force where cadres are being directly recruited with a salary of Rs. 8,500 a month.

It has been reported that hundreds of applicants have turned up for walk-in interviews held at the LTTE "Police Headquarters" in Kilinochchi. The interviews were open only for "citizens of Thamil Eelam" and strict screening procedures were to follow to prevent the infiltration of rival groups, including loyalists of Karuna.

"We will provide the military training and place them in various LTTE projects, but when the need arises we use them for fighting," LTTE 'Police Chief' Nadesan told a Colombo weekly, The Sunday Times.

BoI activities in NorthEast

June 28 - Mr.Arjuna Ranatunge, Deputy Minister for Tourism and Foreign Investment Promotion Monday paid a visit to Trincomalee, and held discussion with the officials of the Trincomalee District Chamber of Commerce and local investors. He later briefed the media based in the east port city about the future activities of the Board of Investment (BoI).

Accompanied by BoI officials and local investors, Mr.Ranatunge later visited the sites where BoI approved development projects are implemented in the district. BoI comes under the Ministry of Tourism and Foreign Investment Promotion.

Mr. Terrence Sundaram, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the BoI northeast regional office, received Mr.Arjuna Ranatunge. Mr.K.Thurairajah, President of the Trincomalee District Chamber of Commerce (TDCC), Chief Executive Officer of the TDCC Mr.Geetha Fontgallon, Mr.T.Uthayakumaran, Managing Director of Thurairajah and Sons and Mr. Terrence Sundaram participated in the discussions.

Mr. Sundaram handed over a report on the BoI approved projects in the northeast province. According to the report, already sixteen BoI approved projects are in operation in the northeast province, six in Trincomalee district, 4 in Amparai, and 3 in Batticaloa, 2 in Vavuniya and one in Jaffna, BoI sources said. BoI has approved thirteen new projects in the northeast province, 2 in Amparai, 2 in Batticaloa, 1 in Killinochchi and 8 in Trincomalee.

In reply to questions by journalists Mr.Arjuna Ranatunge said his stand was that the development of the country should go ahead while country leaders tackle the national question to find a solution separately.

Tamil journalists threatned

June 29 - The LTTE's dissident Karuna faction has ordered pro-LTTE Tamil reporters to leave the Eastern Province or face the consequences, according to Batticaloa based sources. Lake House reporter, Thurairathnam, Thinakkural reporter Santhawarasa and Sudaroli reporter Vedanayagam have left Batticaloa following warnings they received from the Karuna loyalists, according to local sources.

Thinakkural Batticaloa correspondent Chandrapragash said that he was also threatened with death if he continued to file reports that the Karuna faction deemed partial to Prabhakaran. He said he was leaving Batticaloa immediately.

Karuna loyalists had distributed leaflets in the East warning Tamil journalists supporting what they describe as the "Wanni leadership" of the LTTE. The leaflet said that the Karuna faction had received information that some Tamil medium journalists had explicitly supported Prabhakaran and had justified his terrorist acts. "Within another three months, the Karuna Faction will take control of the entire Eastern Province and if the said journalists do not stop their acts they will face the same treatment that was meted out to Prabhakaran's henchmen in the recent past", the leaflet said.

Sources also said that the Tamil reporters, who had left the East had arrived in Colombo. However, since they were still receiving phone calls threatening them with death, they intended to leave Colombo as well.

Convicted corporal to give evidence

June 29 - The Jaffna High Court Judge Mr.K.P.S.Varatharajah fixed the inquiry for July 28 into the six Habeas Corpus (HC) applications submitted by parents and relatives of 45 persons who are reported disappeared after the arrest by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) during the year 1996.

When the HC applications were taken up for inquiry Monday 28 June, an army corporal Somaratne Rajapakse who was sentenced to death in the Krishanthy rape and murder case was produced in court. He was brought down from Welikada jail following his written request to the court expressing his willingness to give evidence when the six HC applications were taken up for inquiry.

In a letter to the HC through his lawyer, Mr.Rajapakse had stated that he was serving in Jaffna and Ariyalai areas during the period mentioned in the HC applications and he was able to enlighten the court what happened in Jaffna then. The HC allowed his application and ordered the prison officials to produce Mr.Rajapakse in court. Accordingly he was brought down to Jaffna under heavy security and produced in court. However the Judge put off the inquiry and inquired from Jaffna prison officials whether they could keep him in their custody till the next date. Prison officials replied that they were unable to provide security to Mr.Rajapakse in Jaffna prison, as he was a convicted prisoner in Krishanthy rape and murder case. The Judge then ordered that Mr.Rajapakse should be taken back to Welikada jail and to produce him on 28 July.

GDP grows at 6.2 percent

June 30 - Sri Lanka has recorded a positive growth of 6.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2004. This is the highest growth rate recorded in the past seven quarters, Deputy Governor, Central Bank, W. A. Wijewardane, told a press briefing at the Central Bank headquarters on 29 June. "This augurs well for growth in the remainder of the year," he said.

In the first quarter of 2004, Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

grew in real terms by 6.2 per cent over the corresponding quarter of the previous year. This is a continuation of the growth momentum that began in the second half of 2002. This growth reflects the macro-economic stability that prevailed throughout that period. Although this growth is less than 6.9 per cent recorded during the last quarter of 2003, it exceeds the annual growth of 5.9 per cent attained in 2003. This is the seventh consecutive quarter that Sri Lanka recorded an economic growth in excess of 5.5 per cent, he said.

The macro-economic environment that had prevailed for the most part of these seven quarters and was conducive to achieving and sustaining this relatively high period of growth included greater fiscal discipline, declining interest rates, a stable foreign exchange market, and falling inflation, together with prudent monetary management.

One challenge is ensuring the required level of investment to achieve and sustain such a high growth over a long period. Future expansion in investment will ultimately depend on the critical factors that impact on both investor and consumer confidence.

14 arrested in Buddhist temple

July 6 - Police took into custody fourteen young Tamil persons from a Buddhist temple in the village of Bubula in Hingurakgoda in the Pollannaruwa District Monday, 5 July.The Police also recovered three T- 56, three T - 84 type assault rifles, a T - 81 special assault rifle and six hand grenades from the temple. A van and a car in which they had traveled were also seized from the Bubula temple, Police said. Reports from the east linked the arrested men with the LTTE's breakaway Karuna group.

The arrested men were produced before the Hinguragoda magistrate on 6 July who released them on personal surety bail. Possession of illegal weapons is a non bailable offense under Sri Lankan law, and hence many were surprised that the arrested perons were released on bail so quickly. It is said that the police had no evidence to connect the weapons found in the temple to the arrested youth.

Meanwhile, the head of LTTE's political division in Batticaloa said that he had conveyed message to a senior Police officer in Colombo confirming the identities of the fourteen youth as members of the renegade commander Karuna's group. "Now it is very obvious that the Sri Lankan authorities are conniving with their military intelligence and Police to gather, arm and send stragglers of the Karuna group to murder innocents and sabotage the peace," he is quoted as saying.

Some media reports said that the chief monk of the Bubula temple (Bodhirukkarama Vihara) was a candidate of the JHU in the Polannaruwa District at the elections to Parliament in April this year, and that he is a member of Jathika Hela Urumaya(JHU), the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist party. Polannaruwa borders the Batticaloa District. The Bubula monk had reportedly told Police that the Tamil youth were bound for the east but that he was unaware that they were armed. The monk had reportedly claimed that the youth were sent to him by the JHU headquarters in Colombo, Police sources said.

EU urges parties to restart talks

July 10 - European Union (EU) expressed its concern about the escalation of violence and urged all parties to continue to respect the Ceasefire Agreement and to work towards resuming the peace talks.

In a statement issued on July 10, the EU said, "The presidency of the European Union is concerned about the recent increase in political violence in Sri Lanka, including the political killing in the East and elsewhere and the suicide bomb attack on July 7, the first since the ceasefire began.

"The EU condemns all forms of political violence. There is no excuse for such violence which can never resolve the internal differences in Sri Lanka. The vast majority of Sri Lankans - from all communities - simply desire peace for themselves and for their children. The political violence we have seen recently will make it more difficult to restart substantive negotiations towards peace and to deliver on the simple demand from the majority of Sri Lanka's citizens for peace and security.

"The Presidency of the European Union calls upon all parties to prevent further violence and welcomes that all sides continue to respect the ceasefire. We urge all parties to continue to work towards the restart of substantive talks. Only through dialogue can there be a negotiated settlement to the conflict. We reaffirm the EU's support for a solution which meets the aspirations of all communities in Sri Lanka, including the protection of human rights."

Karuna breaks silence

July 11 - Speaking to the BBC Tamil service by telephone, LTTE's renegade eastern commander, Col Karuna, said he was currently in eastern Sri Lanka, where he claimed the people supported him. He said he would set up a political party and enter politics.

The Tigers have accused Col Karuna of helping the Sri Lankan military to wage a covert war against them in the east. The Tiger leadership has told Norwegian peace monitors that they cannot restart peace talks with the government until the issue of alleged support by the government to Karuna was settled.

Sri Lankan officials have repeatedly denied supporting the renegade commander. In the interview with the BBC, Col Karuna denied any links with the Sri Lankan military or intelligence agencies.

And he said the Tigers themselves were responsible for a recent upsurge in violence in the east of the country, which has seen cadres on both sides and their supporters being killed in recent months.

"It is the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] which is killing our supporters, and they are to blame for other violent incidents also," he claimed. Col Karuna also said Tiger supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran did not believe in a negotiated settlement and was gearing up to resume war.

In March Col Karuna, LTTE's second most senior military leader, split from the leadership saying he wanted to run the east separately. He accused the northern leadership of ignoring the interests of eastern Tamils, and giving members from northern Sri Lanka plum posts within the organisation. The Tigers launched a swift operation in mid-April to put an end to the unprecedented revolt within the organisation.

Col Karuna disbanded his forces and reportedly asked thousands of his men and women to return home. Until now, his whereabouts had remained a mystery.

"I retreated because I didn't want thousands of my supporters to die in the internecine fighting," he told the BBC. Accusing the Tiger rebel leadership of wasting six rounds of peace talks to find a permanent solution to the conflict, Col Karuna said there was no way a separate state for the Tamils could be achieved through an armed struggle.

Analysts say the re-emergence of Col Karuna does not augur well for the stalled peace process, and that the Tigers may further harden their stance.

LTTE criticises Govt support for Karuna

July 12 - The government came in for severe attack from the LTTE's Head of the political division for Batticaloa, Mr. E

Kousalyan, for "openly promoting" renegade commander Mr. Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (Karuna) by "providing him state radio facilities to attack the Tigers with the obvious aim of destroying the mutual goodwill on which the cease fire is based."

Mr. Kousalyan was reacting to a BBC Tamil Service interview with the renegade commander broadcast on the state run radio on 11 July. "The truth is out today beyond any doubt that the Sri Lankan state is providing him state facilities to wage a proxy war of black propaganda against the LTTE and to carry out terrorist attacks with the assistance Sri Lankan military intelligence to derail the cease fire," he said.

"The Sri Lankan state's aims are now very obvious to us. It is now openly exploiting Karuna in the hope of weakening the LTTE. This would make it plain to the Tamil people that the Sri Lankan state is not interested at all in taking forward the peace process but is only bent on using the talks and the ceasefire to wage a terrorist war on us in the baseless hope of weakening us militarily and politically," Mr. Kousalyan said. "We are ready to face the war that the Sri Lankan state has decided thrust on us thus," he emphasised.

Terror Stalks journalists in the East

July 13 - The French media watchdog Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) in special report on threats faced by journalists in Sri Lanka's eastcoast: "The impunity which prevails in cases involving the murder and assault of journalists is seriously jeopardizing press freedom and the peace process in Sri Lanka."

The RSF said, "Reporters without Borders publishes an investigative report on threats plaguing the press, even as threats against journalists in eastern Sri Lanka reached alarming levels over the last few weeks, Reporters without Borders had been conducting an investigation in the country.

In the wake of Aiyathurai Nadesan's murder in May 2004 in the eastern city of Batticaloa, Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim journalists described the difficulties facing province-based correspondents. Before he was killed, Nadesan had told Reporters without Borders: "We are always caught in the crossfire. It is very hard for us to check our information with both the security forces and the Tamil Tigers. And when a local news article is released from Colombo, we may face reprisals in the field."

During a fact-finding mission in Sri Lanka early this year, Reporters without Borders interviewed dozens of journalists. The majority expressed their apprehensions and frustrations in dealing with a situation that has become much too volatile for them to assert that press freedom is a given in the country. Moreover, the association has noted new outbreaks of threats and assaults against journalists within the last few weeks. The impunity which prevails in cases involving the murder and assault of journalists is seriously jeopardizing press freedom and the peace process in Sri Lanka.

Lanka accedes to Weapons Treaty

July 14 - On a proposal made by Minister of Foreign Affairs Lakshman Kadirgamar the Cabinet of Ministers has approved Sri Lanka's accession to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be, excessively injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons).

While acceding to this Convention, Sri Lanka will also become a Party to the Amended Protocol II on mines, booby traps and other devices, Protocol II on Incendiary Weapons and Protocol IV on Blinding Laser Weapons.

According to a Foreign Ministry press release the Cabinet of Ministers has further approved the submission of a report on a voluntary basis under Article VII of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel land mines to which Sri Lanka is yet to become a State Party.

The above measures are a reiteration of Sri Lanka's unwavering commitment towards the further promotion of humanitarian law and its continued constructive engagement with the international community on the issue of land mines.

Thé Minister of Foreign Affairs is expected to formally deposit the Instrument of Accession of Sri Lanka to the convention on certain Conventional Weapons at the "Treaty Event-2004" to be held in New York from 21-24 September 2004, during the 59th session of the UN General Assembly.

New Jaffna Court complex

July 15 - Wednesday Sri Lanka's Chief Justice Mr.Sarath N.Silva laid the foundation stone for the construction of a modern and state-of-the-art courts complex in Jaffna on 15 July. The 3-storied building will cover 50,000 square feet and house all levels of court with provision for a provincial Court of Appeal. The Treasury has allocated Rs. 200 million for this purpose. The construction work is scheduled to be completed in October 2005.

Justice Ministry Secretary Mr.S.K. Gamlath, Judicial Service Commission Secretary Mr.D.C. Jayatilaka, members of Law Reform Commission and World Bank officials, accompanied the Chief Justice to Jaffna. Jaffna High Court Judge Mr.K.P.S.Varatharajah presided over the foundation laying ceremony.

Judges, lawyers, government officials, Jaffna University Vice Chancellor and representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations participated in the event. Mr.Sarath N.Silva later participated in a meeting held in Veerasingham Hall where all judicial officials and lawyers gathered..

The Chief Justice stated that the soil of Jaffna has been the home of a great civilization, where people of rich cultural heritage respected for their high intellect and acumen lived in peace and harmony. He added that it is the collective duty to rise from ashes of destruction and to rebuild something better and grander than what has been destroyed for the benefit of future generations and mentioned that courthouses in Mannar and Vavuniya have been commenced under a programme, which he launched many years ago. He noted that the state of the art Trincomalee Court complex also funded by the Legal and Judicial Reform Project would be opened shortly. The three storied Trincomalee court complex has a floor area of 36,210 square feet to accommodate six courts, two High Courts including a Commercial High Court, two Magistrate's courts, a District Court and a Labour Tribunal.

The Secretary to the Ministry Suhada Gamalath stated that the former grandeur of the Judiciary and the Bar of Jaffna, should be resorted and communicated a message of felicitation from Minister John Seneviratne.

The Project Director of the World Bank funded Legal and Judicial Reforms Project Mrs. Shamalie Gunawardana observed that this is the largest construction under the project and that the objectives of the project are to modernize the country's judicial, legal and regulatory framework and enhance capacity building which are essential for the promotion of the business environment and reduce transaction costs.

The High Court Judge K. P. S. Varatharajah expressed appreciation to the government and said that this is a landmark event for the people of Jaffna as well as for the country. He also observed the new computerized Court complex will enable speedier administration of justice and better coordination with the entire court network of the country.

July 18 – Vandalism :The foundation stone laid by Chief Justice Sarath N. Silva last week for the new court complex in Jaffna was vandalised during the night on 17 July The disfigured foundation stone has been found abandoned on a street behind Nallur temple. A note under the name of "Students Brigade" has reportedly been deposited close to the foundation stone. Military sources claimed the LTTE was behind the incident.

A-9 reconstruction completed

July 15 - The reconstruction of the Jaffna-Kandy A-9 highway has been completed. A spokesman for the Road Development Authority (RDA) told the press that contractors have completed reconstruction of 103 kilometres of the highway from Omanthai.

"Work on the highway which commenced in January 2003 has been completed. This has made the transport of passengers and goods from the North to the South more efficient and convenient. However, the Authority discovered minor damages caused to some parts of the highway due to over-loading. We are working on them," the spokesman said. The reconstruction had been divided into eight sections and assigned to different contractors to expedite the project.

The Road Development Authority (RDA) and eight private contractors signed agreements to reconstruct the highway which had been badly damaged in the war.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was the principle benefactor of the project, granting Rs 500 million out of the estimated total cost of Rs 613 million and another Rs 85 million required for reconstruction. The Government granted the remaining Rs. 200 million.

100,000 drop in Jaffna student population

July 16 - Jaffna's student population has dwindled by more than a hundred thousand since 1995, Government Agent for the northern district said Friday, 16 July, speaking at a meeting on development priorities in the peninsula. Educationists in Jaffna say prolonged war, poverty, displacement and garrisioning of entire towns and villages by Sri Lankan armed forces caused the huge drop in the peninsula's student population.

The District Development Committee meeting was chaired by Mr. Mavai Senathirajah, Tamil National Alliance MP for Jaffna. Heads of government departments, senior officials and all Jaffna MPs except Mr. Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam, Mr. Suresh Premachandran and Mr. Douglas Devananda were present at the meeting. Head of the Thamil Eelam Administrative Service for Jaffna, Mr. S. Vijitharan, also attended.

During the discussion on the present state of education in the peninsula, the GA, Mr. Sellaiah Pathmanathan, observed that the Jaffna student population which was more than 240,000 in 1995 is now less than 140,000.

Director of the Road Development Authority for Jaffna, Mr. S. Seenivasan, said that Colombo does not allocate any money for road development or reconstruction in the peninsula but provides only 22.8 million annually for maintenance.

Dr. S. Sathurmugam, Director of the Jaffna Teaching Hospital told the meeting that many patients sleep on floor in the wards because there aren't enough beds in the hospital. He said the Intensive Care Unit is in urgent need of new building and the Children's wards have to be repaired.

Government officials in Jaffna say the deliberations of the District Development Committe may come to nought if allocations under decentralised budget for MPs are not released in a few weeks, before the fiscal year ends.

'Sucide bombers' arrested

July 17 - The Modera police arrested two alleged LTTE suicide bombers at Mattakkuliya in Colombo on 15 July who had been detailed to target a function attended by political leaders including the President, according to reports based on intelligence sources.

They said the bombers had been gathering information about functions the President would attend, including Sri Ramanna Nikaya's 64th Upasampada ceremony held at the Sugathadasa Stadium on 15 July. The President and Prime Minister were to attend the ceremony, but had not attended the ceremony on the advise of the Intelligence Bureau of the Police.

The two suspects were identified as Suppaiah Kanakeshan alias Kangejan alias Nashawan and Nadarajah Ramesh alias Sencil Thamil. At the time of their arrest Modera police had recovered two cyanide capsules worn around the neck, one LTTE tag, an original National Identity card, a forged Identity card, a letter written in Tamil under the letterhead of the LTTE, two blue films and a cellular phone in their possession.

The arrested men were being questioned by the police to find the person who had provided him with lodging in Colombo and other suicide LTTE cadres who are believed to be living in Colombo, the Modera police said.

OIC Modera police D. S. Wickramasinghe said that three wheel drivers of the area had assisted the police in arresting the bombers. One of the drivers had informed the police that two suspicious looking youth had got into his three wheeler and the police were able to arrest the bombers immediately afterwards. The two arrested men have been remanded in custody until 28 July.

According to reports from Colombo, Police have obtained information from suspects arrested over the Kollupitiya suicide bomb blast on 7 July and from the LTTE cadres arrested with cyanide capsules at Modera and Pettah, that four teams of four LTTE cadres each had arrived in Colombo to assassinate Minister Douglas Devananda and Karuna loyalists. Meanwhile several other teams have been deployed in the East to hound out Karuna loyalists, according to information received by the NIB which has cautioned the government that a clash is imminent in Colombo between the LTTE and the Karuna faction. Police have information that the LTTE has transported arms and ammunition including suicide bomber kits in lorries carrying fish and paddy to Colombo from the North.

Reforms must apply to state and private media

July 19 - The proposed media reforms should be applicable to both state-run media and the private media, the Organisation of Professional Association (OPA) has said.

The joint opposition in parliament on 15 July submitted amendments to state media regulations to enable the Constitutional Council to make appointments to high posts in the ANCL, the Rupavahini Corporation and the SLBC.

OPA President Parakrama Karunaratne recently wrote to the Secretary to expressing the association's views on a range of issues. The letter was written the day before the Joint Opposition met to discuss the proposed media reforms.

Karunaratne said: "OPA is in support of Media Reforms, subject however that these reforms are applicable to all sections of the media, whether State or private. With regard to amend the statutes of the SLRC and SLBC, OPA has no major objection and may welcome such moves if prior to introducing such amendments the 17th Amendment is revised to de-politicise the Constitutional Council. Without such action it may not produce the expected results of continuing with the Constitutional Council or amending

the aforesaid statutes.

"OPA also submits that certain sections of the private media are also guilty of the allegations that were made at the last meeting. Thus, OPA proposes a Code of Ethics for the media. Such a Code should have sufficient legal power for enforcement.

"OPA must express its concern over the manner both the Government and the Joint Opposition are presently conducting themselves. While there are several pressing issues facing the people of this country, it appears that the Joint Opposition is more concerned about media reforms rather than addressing these fundamental issues.

"OPA believes that media reforms, while desirable the Joint Opposition make use of the present opportunity to address key areas such as peace, law and order, public security, economy, cost of living and transport.

"OPA notes with dismay the failure of the Government and the opposition to reach a consensus on the above and other key issues. The total disregard of the views and aspirations of the people by the elected representatives causes considerable concern to us. Abuse and wastage of public funds to maintain elected representatives either in the Parliament or in the Provincial Councils should be matters that are addressed on a priority basis.

"OPA requests you to convey our views expressed herein to the Joint Opposition. We are unable to participate at the meeting scheduled for 15th July but would like to have an opportunity to meet the Joint Opposition on a one-to-one basis not only to discuss media reforms but other matters we have highlighted in this letter.

"We wish to state that the OPA is comprised of 36 member organisations with a wide diversity of views and as such requires a dedicated period of time rather than a meeting with a cross-section of participants whose interactions may deviate from the substance and focus we wish to contribute."

Dhanapala meets LTTE's Pulidevan

A top Sri Lankan official handling the peace process with the LTTE met with his rebel counterpart in Colombo on 20 July in the first high level contact in months, according to officials in Colombo. Jayantha Dhanapala, the head of the government's peace secretariat, met with S. Pulidevan, Secretary of the LTTE's Peace Secretariat, in what was officially described as a "courtesy call", but official sources said the meeting was an important ice breaker.

It was the highest level meeting between the two sides since the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga came to office following snap elections in April this year. The government said recently that it had prepared an agenda to revive stalled peace talks with the LTTE and was awaiting a response. Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen is expected Colombo shortly to hold talks with Colombo and the LTTE leadership.

Meanwhile President Chandrika Kumaratunga expressed hope that the LTTE would respond positively to the government's moves to resume peace talks. The Presidential Media Division in a statement said Ms.Kumaratunga during a meeting with the visiting German foreign minister Joschka Fisher noted that the government had moved ahead in formulating the agenda for the talks and was awaiting the LTTE's response. She assured the German minister of the UPFA government's commitment to reach a negotiated peace acceptable to all communities in Sri Lanka.

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Cross Currents

Sathya

Part I - The Karuna Factor: A challenge or obstacle?

Colonel Karuna is once again in the news, after his retreat and demobilization following the 'Good Friday' (9th April) putsch by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership against the Karuna forces in the Batti-Amparai region.

The 'news' as revealed to the media by Karuna's woman comrade Nilavini, who surrendered to the Vanni-based LTTE during the third week in June, is that the military-intelligence establishment provided Karuna, his family and some of his comrades protection in Colombo, a few days after the Good Friday offensive. Further, Ali Zahir Moulana a UNP National List Member of Parliament and a close confidant of Ranil Wickremesinghe, with equally close contacts with the Vanni-based LTTE leadership, revealed publicly that he had established contacts with Karuna at the request of LTTE Batti-Amparai leader Ramesh in order to escort Karuna and his comrades to Colombo as part of a deal aimed at offering Karuna an 'exit'. He explained that he had done so on humanitarian grounds.

Following these revelations Ali Zahir Moulana resigned his seat from parliament so as to save his leader Ranil Wickremesinghe and the UNP from any embarrassment. That the UPFA was going to seize the opportunity to embarrass the UNP was also evident in the press briefing by Media Minister Mangala Samarasinghe and the reportage in the State media institutions which went to town on the Ali Moulana-LTTE nexus (read UNP-LTTE nexus). The UNP (indirectly) and the LTTE (directly), on the other hand, accused the UPFA Government of duplicity and adventurism in extending support to Karuna and that its action could threaten the peace process and the ceasefire agreement. This allegation was denied by the UPFA Government, although the Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera did not rule out the possibility of individuals in the military-intelligence apparatus of establishing contacts with Karuna.

Meanwhile Douglas Devananda, leader of EPDP and cabinet minister, went public and declared that he had established contacts with Karuna after his retreat to extend political and moral support, but that he did not intend extending such support if Karuna resorted to armed action against the Vanni-based LTTE leadership.

It is clear from all these developments that the 'Karuna factor' is very much an issue that either needs to be 'factored' into the peace process or neutralised. It is not something that can be ignored or would fade away. It is for this reason that Sathya has posed the question as to whether the 'Karuna Factor' is a challenge or an obstacle to the peace process. The answer to this key question is possible only after having considered the following series of ancillary questions most of which are, in the typical Sathya style, leading questions!

Firstly, why should anyone, UPFA Government and opposition UNP included, be apologetic about giving protection to Karuna at a time when the Vanni-based LTTE leadership deployed its fighting forces to quell an internal dissent through the force of arms and, in the process, violated many provision in the ceasefire agreement? It must be noted that the incidents exposed by Nilaveni, the one time comrade of Karuna, refers to the period immediately following the 'Good Friday' military putsch by the Vanni-based leadership against the Karuna forces, which resulted in him demobilizing his main armed formation and abandoning or destroying some of the heavy weaponry. Further, Karuna had then clearly stated his position that his decision to withdraw was to avoid a bloodbath and that his intention was to work towards the upliftment of the People of the Eastern province.

So, why should any Government of the day have any qualms or inhibitions in having given Karuna and his comrades protection either on humanitarian or on political grounds? Further, the issue of protection also applies to a large number of child soldiers who were demobilized by Karuna before retreating and who found their way to their respective homes and families, only to be hounded and re-recruited by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership. So, why should not the Government, including UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies, give protection to these underage recruits who had voluntarily returned to their homes? And, if they do give protection, why be apologetic?

In this context, despite attempts by the Media Minister Mangala Samaraweera to discredit the UNP through the Ali Zahir Moulana-Karuna episode by using the State media institutions in a highly partisan and unethical manner, one must give him credit for making a principled position that the Government's offer to provide security to Karuna stands to date. Further one should welcome his mature statement: "We are duty bound to provide security to any citizen whose life is under threat. That offer stands, but the internal conflicts in the LTTE must be resolved within." (Daily Mirror, 25th June).

But, there is the proverbial "other side of the coin" as well, which can be best summed through another series of (leading) questions. Having enjoyed the protection of the State, should Karuna and his forces be allowed to abuse the protection extended on political or humanitarian grounds by engaging in hostile operations or a proxy war against the Vanni-based LTTE in the Eastern province and elsewhere, including the intimidation and killing of their civilian sympathizers, particularly when there is a peace process on? Should the Tamil Broadcasting Corporation, London (TBC), which has a daily one hour prime slot in the Tamil National Service of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC) and whose Board members domiciled in Europe were subject to death threats from the LTTE for carrying news and analysis focusing on issues relating to human rights, pluralism and democracy in Tamil society and polity, now compromise itself by functioning as an 'organ' supportive of what the Karuna faction says and does (explicitly as well as implicitly) by carrying statements in a manner that is clearly propagandistic, provocative and inflammatory? This was already highlighted by Sathya's previous comments.

In fact, during the whole of last week, the TBC broadcast in the state-owned SLBC carried interviews and an "Appeal to the Tamil people" by one Maaran, identified as spokesperson Batti-Amparai LTTE (Karuna Wing), virtually declaring war on Pirabhakaran and the

"Vanni LTTE" and promising to bring the Eastern province under its total control within three months. The tone and the voice modulation behind the broadcast of these statements were clearly unprofessional, biased and jingoistic.

By abusing the prime time obtained in the State-owned SLBC to engage in propagandistic materials aimed at fuelling an already inflammatory situation prevailing in the Batti-Amparai region and in endorsing the armed propaganda strategy of the Karuna faction, has made some including Sathya wonder whether the TBC is deviating from its original commitment of instilling a culture of tolerance, democratic dissent, humanism, pluralism and democracy to a brutalized and a dehumanized Tamil society and polity. While the Karuna faction has every right to exercise its right to self-defence, it should not be allowed to take the form of a proxy war that could scuttle the ceasefire and lead to the collapse of the peace process.

At the same time, maximum pressure should be exerted on the LTTE by the international community, the Government and the human rights lobby to cease immediately the hounding and the targeting of members and civilian sympathizers of the Karuna faction, the re-recruitment and conscription of underage recruits and adults demobilized by Karuna and who chose to return to their homes to lead a normal life. The genesis of the on-going orgy of killings and the climate of fear in the Eastern province clearly lies in the use of force by the Vanni-based LTTE leadership to settle internal differences and its failure (or inability) to recognize the specificity of the Eastern province as well as the principle of pluralism.

Sathya fully agrees with Jayadeva Uyangoda (in his Irecentcolumn to the Daily Mirror), where following a recent visit to Batticaloa he observed, "The issues raised in the Vanni-Karuna dispute are essentially political ones and should be resolved through political means, and not by means of internecine war and violence. Actually, the present crisis in the Tamil nationalist movement is one that will test the capacity of the LTTE as well as its breakaway faction to bring about any degree of political emancipation to the Tamil nation. It is quite an irony that both factions of the LTTE on this particular issue of the split have proved the critics of Tamil national struggle correct."

Of course, Jayadeva Uyangoda, as a Sinhalese will not face any danger to his life for having made the above observation. However, Sathya being a Tamil, and who had got used to looking behind only one shoulder, now will have to learn to look behind both shoulders! Of course, in the process he may forget to look at the danger lying in front of him!! Such has been the plight of Tamil intellectuals, political activists and social reformers whose lives were claimed by self-appointed sole representatives and sole protectors of all variants for trying to arrest the slide into nihilism of the just and (once) peaceful struggle of the Tamil people for their identity, self-respect and social progress within a unified Sri Lanka.

But, Sathya is not prepared to roll over and play dead, so that he may live, while others around him die. That would be the most degrading form of existence.

Part II - Forgotten children of war: Whose responsibility?

The treatment of the Karuna affair, if it may be called that, by the media (including last week's Sathya column) as well as by policymakers has largely focused on matters relating to security and impact on the peace process.

In the process, a humanitarian problem of immense proportion has been by and large ignored. This is the plight of the under-age recruits who were demobilized by Karuna following the 'Good Friday' putsch against his forces by the Vanni-based leadership in April. The theme of this column has been prompted by two recent reports.

The two reports in question are that of the Human Rights Watch and a document circulated by human rights activists under the name 'Collective for Batticaloa', both of which portray a bleak and a heart wrenching situation facing the demobilized children of war in the Batti-Amparai region. Incidentally Sathya prefers the term 'children of war' to child soldiers, since not all of the under-age recruits were deployed in direct combat, though a considerable number was.

The Human Rights Watch report prepared by its South Asia researcher Tej Thapa highlighted the fact that over the last three weeks, the LTTE had commenced the forced "re-recruitment" of child combatants released by Karuna. In a stinging indictment, the report accused the LTTE of, "stealing children from their homes to put them on the firing line. Despite all their promises, they are demonstrating absolute disregard for the most vulnerable part of the population it claims to represent".

Although the above issue has been in the public domain for some time, Sathya also wishes to share with the readers a lengthy passage from a report issued by the 'Collective for Batticaloa', which refers to a humanitarian problem that remains etched in Sathya's psyche and has tormented him over the past week . To quote: *"It has been estimated that approximately 60 percent of the returned children are young girls. Many of them*

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are instantly recognizable because of their very short hair. While the hair may grow longer, issues of anxiety that these young women face may not disappear. Returning to school is not easy. Some have outgrown in age their level of school knowledge...Social ostracization and fear surrounding the returnee impedes easy integration. As one respondent said, the child has to walk alone to school. Nobody would walk along with her out of fear. Parents of the other children are scared that their own children might be recruited in a new wave of recruitment if they befriend these children...Schools too are worried about how returning children might either 'lure' other children into the fold of the LTTE or be a threat to the well being of their own children. They are marked people. They, the children are 'shy', reticent and withdrawn for the most part....Girls with their closely cropped hair are highly visible and are marked. At many check points they are singled out for scrutiny, making all heads turn and look at them. Previously, before the release, the short hair, acted as a deterrent to them running away as they would have been easily discovered. At present they are targets for re-recruitment and social ostracization. It is a psychologically traumatic state of mind for the child."

Yes, it is psychologically traumatic not only to the child, but to all those who come face to face with these children of war or read reports that highlight their plight. Those of us who are not traumatized, need to have our heads examined.

And, this brings Sathya to the issue relating to who is responsible and what is to be done? Certainly, one 'actor' (to use a hackneyed cliché) is of course the LTTE. But, it is futile appealing to that 'actor' since like all good actors the LTTE would deny responsibility. The other actor or actors who shoulder responsibility is the Government as well as the UNICEF. It is these actors who need to be told to stop acting and to fulfill their responsibilities, not only in addressing the cause of the problem (which may be beyond their control), but certainly in addressing the consequences of the problem. Reports from the ground indicate that the proverbial buck is being passed around. NGOs dealing with humanitarian and psycho-social trauma seem to think that the under-age recruits are the concern of the UNICEF which is mandated with an Action Plan for the rehabilitation of child soldiers. The UNICEF on the other hand while having a mandate to intervene, seem to think that their mandate is only the 'Action Plan' that involves the setting-up of Transit Centres for the rehabilitation of child combatants handed over by the LTTE directly to UNICEF.

But, herein lies the 'Catch 22'. The Action Plan that the UNICEF entered into with the LTTE through its humanitarian arm, the TRO, covers only the child combatants handed over by the LTTE to UNICEF. Notwithstanding that the LTTE continue to release children with one hand while recruiting with the other, the UNICEF's Action Plan does not cover the child combatants and under-age recruits who were demobilized by Karuna and who went directly to their homes and respective families. UNICEF must be credited for going public on these recruitments in recent times, despite its earlier stance of appeasement of the LTTE and remaining mum. It is also commendable that UNICEF is going through the rituals of registering these children.

But having registered them, the UN agency does not seem to have a clue as to what to do next. Further, it is ridiculous to expect the affected families of the children of war demobilized by Karuna to hand over their children to the UNICEF-TRO run Transit Centres in Kilinochchi, and with no guarantee that UNICEF will be able to take the children out of the LTTE-controlled areas in the event of outbreak of hostilities.

Likewise, the Government cannot wash their hands off this humanitarian catastrophe and treat the issue of demobilization of the children of war in the East as a matter that is internal to the LTTE.

The Government would then be abdicating its responsibilities to its citizens. In Sathya's opinion, what is required is for the Government and UNICEF is to formulate a separate Action Plan that involves the families of the demobilized children as well as the local community. For obvious reasons, this can be made operational only in Government-controlled areas, with the option of setting-up rehabilitation centres in areas outside the East, if the need arises. Care must be taken that these rehabilitation centres do not end up as another Bindunuwewa.

In view of the forces of chauvinism and vigilantes lurking within State structures, the UNICEF and other international humanitarian NGOs should be given the primary responsibility for the running of these camps as well as the rehabilitation and re-integration programmes for the affected children.

In this regard, Sathya also wishes to address a related issue. There have been reports of some families showing resistance against the LTTE's recruitment drive. There are some intellectuals who feel that ultimately this is the most effective deterrence to the LTTE's recruitment drive. Some of these intellectuals and activists seem to feel that the 'liberal' intervention that involves lobbying with the Government and the international community would come to naught and that what is required is the 'radical' intervention aimed at strengthening the resistance capacity of the families and local community against the LTTE.

The latter option suggested by armchair radicals, in the opinion of Sathya, is more romantic than radical. Or as Subramanya Bharathi, the Tamil poet penned, "brave only in words" (Vaaisollil Veerar). The resistance being shown by some families in the East to the LTTE is largely individual and based on a parental instinct to protect their children. It is yet to assume the form of collective resistance. In fact, recent reports indicate that the LTTE has already commenced a drive against the parents who are defying the LTTE that includes physical assault as well as death threats. Given the LTTE character, it will not be long before these death threats are executed, literally speaking.

Given the magnitude of the humanitarian problem highlighted above and the nature of the LTTE which has scant regard for human rights and continue to feed children to their war machinery, the responsibility lies squarely with the Government and the international community, through the UNICEF and NGOs, to rehabilitate the demobilized children of war and to protect them from re-recruitment, at least in the Government-controlled areas. It is then that the local community can become empowered or at least feel empowered enough to collectively resist the inhumane practice of child recruitment.

To romanticize individual resistance from families at this juncture and giving it exaggerated publicity will only do more harm than good to the children and their families.

Part III - Colombo suicide blast: LTTE denial and Govt. reaction

Yet another female suicide bomber attained martyrdom and entered the famed photo gallery of Black Tigers by blowing herself up after having failed to get her target Douglas Devananda, the leader of EPDP and cabinet minister.

The LTTE, promptly and predictably, denied responsibility, condemned

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the suicide attack and blamed it on "some elements who are working to disrupt peace efforts", aimed at confusing the "people who are hoping for peace and disrupt the prevailing environment". The LTTE in short said all the right things in public with the Canadian Foreign Minister giving the denial credibility by proclaiming that, "No person or group has claimed responsibility for this deplorable act. I urge all parties to refrain from casting blame while an investigation is under way." It was as though the Canadian Government's intelligence services never really knew that the LTTE never claims responsibility to suicide attacks and that martyrdom is bestowed and publicly proclaimed only after a period of time. But the targets are rarely admitted in public.

The US Embassy, on the other hand, in its statement wagged its finger at the LTTE which was carried in the Government-controlled Daily News with screaming headlines. Contrary to the feigned wisdom shown by the Canadian Government, the statement issued by the US Embassy, obviously with clearance from the US State Department, said that "although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the incident bears the hallmarks of an LTTE attack".

So, what has our own Government got to say as to who is responsible and why? Before Sathya turns his antenna in that direction, suffice it to say that the LTTE would certainly be disappointed if the Government actually believed its denial, since the suicide attack was in fact meant to be a message to the Government! The denial of the LTTE was of course for international consumption.

Now, what would have prompted the LTTE to strike at that given time and at that particular target? The answer in Sathya's opinion is that the hit on LTTE members in Batticaloa on Black Tigers Day on July 5, a day venerated by the LTTE in recognition of its martyrs (but, undoubtedly despised by the loved ones of the victims of Black Tigers and by those who see such suicide attacks as acts of cowardice by those who order it), it was just a matter of time that LTTE leader Pirabhakaran would order a retaliation to what was clearly a case of extreme provocation.

It was a message to the Government in the language that the LTTE speaks and unfortunately thinks is the only language that its enemies understand. In this instance, it was the language of the suicide blast in the vicinity of the Prime Minister's Office, a strategically located police station, three foreign missions and two ministries. The message was, literally speaking, loud and, figuratively speaking, clear.

In short the message was that if the Government does not rein in Karuna's hit squads or cease what the LTTE perceives as a "proxy war" waged through Karuna or in the name of Karuna, then it will strike. And, such strikes would not be confined to the Eastern theatre, but will reach into the heart of the capital city. If Douglas Devananda was targeted, it was a case of trying to kill two birds with one stone by also removing a threat to its 'sole representative' status. That Douglas Devananda had always been in LTTE's hit list and will continue to be so is another matter.

The Government clearly had no illusions about LTTE's involvement when it issued a statement that "the perpetrators of this act show callous disregard for human lives and are reverting to violence as means of settling disputes". Although the LTTE was not named, the reference to "reverting" to violence was an oblique reference to the LTTE. Yet, the Government could not get itself to even say that it had the hallmarks of an LTTE attack, while its political spokespersons have gone out of their way to say that even if it was the LTTE, the target was after all a Tamil political opponent and therefore not a matter of grave concern as far as the peace process was concerned.

Every government of the day have this uncanny way of demonizing the LTTE when a war is on and having to dress the LTTE up as an angel or as an enemy of someone else, if it wants to talk to the LTTE. Why the devil cannot one speak to the demon? (Pardon the cynical pun, which has now become a habit to Sathya). Certainly, the LTTE does not come forward to negotiate with the Government of the day, because it sees it to be an angel? The pendulum swing from demonizing to evangelizing the LTTE is what makes successive Governments suspect in the eyes of the Tamil people as well as the international community, not to mention its own people - the Sinhalese. Sathya regrets having to refer to the Government in relation to ethnicity. But, that is precisely what the Governments have done by washing its hands off internecine and fratricidal killings within the Tamil community. This takes Sathya to two cases of black humour which invariably accompanies tragedy.

The first is the wisdom displayed in sections of the Tamil media that since the suicide bomber wore a nylon suicide jacket, as opposed to the denim jackets normally worn by LTTE suicide bombers, that it could not have been the LTTE. And, another newspaper while carrying the caption that the LTTE denies responsibility, indicated in its second heading that the female accomplice of the suicide bomber and worked in the EPDP office in Jaffna. The implication was that the LTTE could not have done it. Somehow the Tamil journalists who either filed the story or gave those stories the loaded headings seem to think that the readers are so gullible to think that the LTTE is not capable of technological innovation by switching from a bulky denim jacket to a less conspicuous nylon jacket. Or, that LTTE does not know the art of infiltration.

The other case of humour was the statement issued by the UPFA General Secretary Susil Premjayanth that "it was revealed in the police investigations that the sole intention of the suicide bomber was to kill Douglas Devananda". So, the sole representative was after the sole alternative. That humour turned black when the Reuters quoted a Government spokesman of saying "It is the LTTE going after a political opponent. It is that and absolutely nothing else. It is resorting to violence to kill an opponent; it is not reverting to hostilities". Clearly the Government was trying to neutralize the UNPs prankish campaign that peace was on the rocks and that the suicide bombers were back in Colombo in view the UPFA's mishandling of peace process. Pirabhakaran must indeed be gnashing his teeth if he thought that the Government had not really got his message and may well be tempted to repeat the message. But, this time around it may not be a Tamil political opponent.

But, coming back to the point, the several statements coming from politicians in the SLFP also revealed a lurking chauvinism that grips most southern politicians. This is manifest in the mindset that as long as Tamils kill Tamils, there is no problem. So, when the LTTE engaged in its orgy of political killings including the killing of Tamil intelligence officers during the UNP's lap around the peace track, the UNP and the Colombo establishment turned a blind eye. It was after all a case of Tamils killing Tamils. Now, it is the turn of the SLFP taking a similar position. Some things do not change. Chauvinism is not always crude. It can be very subtle indeed, akin to the commonly heard refrain "some of our

(continued on next page)

Anti-Conversion Law Disapproved

The following is the text of a joint statement of the Catholic Bishops and the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka on the proposed legislation to ban conversions:

The attention of the Catholic Bishops' Conference and the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka has been drawn to the bill titled, "Prohibition of forcible conversion of Religion" published in the Gazette on 28th May 2004 and to the fact that the Cabinet has approved another suggested draft to ban conversions.

We do recognize that for some time now there has been growing anxiety and agitation over "unethical conversions". This could well be part of the rationale behind these bills. We do not condone any unethical practices or any form of compulsions and do categorically denounce them. We reiterate our call to work together as leaders of all religions in our country to address this situation. We are always ready and willing to participate in any process that would ease religious tensions, identify practices that injure the religious susceptibility of any community and work towards greater religious harmony in our country. However, whilst acknowledging the problem and offering to participate in meaningful ways to redress these issues, we strongly believe that enacting legislation will not solve the problem. On the contrary, it will create problems of its own. Apart from the serious violation of personal freedoms, it will pave the way for the oppression of minority religions in the country. In these circumstances, we have little option but to collaborate in finding other democratic ways to deal with our inter-religious tensions.

Having carefully studied these drafts we wish to state that if they are enacted into legislation the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of all Sri Lankans will be seriously eroded. We are also of the opinion that these drafts contravene the fundamental human rights of our people enshrined in our Constitution as well as accepted prevailing international conventions and norms. Consequently, we have grave concerns that such possible legislation, given today's political climate will destroy the freedom of choice and the character of pluralism, both essential pillars of a modern democratic society. The repercussions of this on our international image will be disastrous. We are therefore compelled to caution our political leaders and inform all Sri Lankans that this trend could well be the beginning of an invasion of the right to personal choice. Our already oppressed people simply cannot be burdened with more restrictions of this nature.

We also take this opportunity to clarify our position on religious and personal freedom. All the four religions in our country have cherished and exercised that right to propagate their religion throughout the world. The fact that missionaries are being sent out from Sri Lanka to propagate religion in other countries demonstrates our appreciation and our exercise of that fundamental right in other countries. Therefore, we see no reason why a fundamental right enjoyed by us in other countries should be denied in our own. We affirm our commitment to protecting the individual's freedom to have or adopt any religion or belief of his or her free choice. No fetters should be placed in the path of the exercise of that freedom by legislative or other means. All religions teach their adherents to perform works of charity and all such works of charity cannot be permitted to be criminalized on the assertion that they serve as allurements. It is both a basic feature and duty of all religions to teach and propagate their faith, for in doing so they spread the highest human values.

For these reasons we disapprove the moves to enact legislation to prohibit or restrict conversions and call upon all people of goodwill to stand up for the free exercise of religious freedom and freedom of conscience for all. ❑

(continued from page 19)

best friends are Tamils" or "some of our best friends are Sinhalese". Sathya's antenna never fails to go up when such patronizing statements are made. In fact, with such friends who needs enemies!

In this case, the Sinhalese progressives are also not above guilt. In this context, Sathya wishes to reproduce a paragraph from his very first column titled, "Peace and Democracy are Indivisible" which was penned several months ago, but in another context.

To quote: "It is forgotten by those well-meaning Sinhalese progressives who, perhaps as a result of their Sinhala 'guilt', see the LTTE as having given the Tamils their self-respect.... Those who speak eloquently today about the need to empower the LTTE in the process of transforming them were quite unconcerned when other Tamil ex-militant organizations were going through the painful process of transforming themselves in the face of continuing chauvinism by the State and adventurism on the part of the LTTE. The same applies to international NGOs who take the task of engaging the LTTE with a missionary zeal, but view with contempt those Tamil militant organizations which laid down arms and entered the democratic mainstream. It is about time that Sinhalese progressives and democrats, who give expression to a collective Sinhala 'guilt' by extending to LTTE the credit of giving the Tamil people their self-respect and dignity, do some soul searching. Their position is untenable and also contrary to the principles of Democracy, Human Rights and Peace. These principles cannot be realized and enjoyed in one part of the country, while the people living in another part are denied these cherished values which alone give meaning to human existence, dignity and self-respect."

Sathya's stand taken then has become reinforced now in view of the utterances by spokespersons of the UPFA Government that the bomb blast in Colombo was no big deal, since the target was "only" a Tamil political opponent. ❑

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Focus on Child Recruitment

HRW slams child recruitment

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are waging a campaign in eastern Sri Lanka to abduct former child soldiers for their forces, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said on 26 June. Over the last three weeks, the armed group has intensified efforts to re-recruit child combatants released by Karuna, HRW said in its latest report.

"The Tigers are stealing children from their homes to put them on the firing line," said Tej Thapa, South Asia researcher for HRW. "Despite all their promises, they are demonstrating absolute disregard for the most vulnerable part of the population it claims to represent."

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and local human rights groups, the LTTE is forcibly abducting children from their homes and threatening parents who dare resist or complain about the abductions. The armed group is believed to be focusing on abducting small groups of children rather than large groups, so as to slowly rebuild its forces without attracting too much attention.

Its members have been going to villages in the Batticaloa district, banging on doors, threatening parents with dire consequences in the event of non-compliance, and abducting eight or nine children from each village, HRW adds. Typically these children are transported on motorised rickshaws to the nearby lagoon.

To evade army checkpoints, they are sent on boats to the Tigers' Vakarai camp. Local sources have heard the Tamil Tigers threaten to immediately kill parents who complain or try to get information about their abducted children.

Another method of forced recruitment is through personalised letters to the parents, ordering them to attend meetings where they are addressed by one of the LTTE area leaders in Batticaloa, HRW added.

For example, at a meeting on June 21 and 22, an LTTE area leader called Yatharthan told attending parents that they had to turn their children over to the armed group in Thihiliwatai on June 24. According to eyewitness accounts, Yatharthan said children 16 years or older must return to armed service. He reportedly scoffed at the mention of UNICEF protection.

Although some parents have organised themselves to resist the LTTE pressure, there is considerable fear of reprisal in small communities with little or no government presence. The LTTE tactics have terrified parents, children and human rights workers, who have no recourse to real protection.

The LTTE has had a history of forcibly recruiting children and placing them on the front lines during combat operations. In February 2003, the LTTE pledged to cease all child recruitment, and to investigate and punish commanders found responsible for child recruitment; this pledge was reiterated in April 2004.

"The Tigers are blatantly violating their obligations under international law and ignoring the efforts of UNICEF to protect these children," Thapa said. "Children are being used to fill the ranks of the Tigers, while their parents face harsh retribution if they try to prevent it."

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which protects children in armed conflict, prohibits the direct use of any child under the age of 18 in armed conflict and prohibits all use of children under 18 by non-state armed groups. Sri Lanka is a party to the protocol, which came into force in February 2002.

HRW has called on international agencies present in eastern Sri Lanka to increase their monitoring presence in the field in areas where these abductions and intimidations are taking place. Such monitoring is particularly needed in the interior villages and areas under LTTE control, where reports of forced recruitment are much higher than in government-controlled areas.

The Government should declare an amnesty for all child soldiers who have returned home to ensure that they can seek help from state protection agencies, HRW said.

Of particular concern, are those combatants who were children when recruited, but who are now over 18 years. This group, highly trained and therefore highly valued by the LTTE, falls beyond the protection mandate of UNICEF. An amnesty would enable this vulnerable population to seek Government protection and move freely in the country, away from areas of LTTE control. An amnesty should be accompanied by an immediate issuance of National Identity Cards to all returned former combatants, HRW said.

LTTE intelligence officers have threatened village Government functionaries against issuing identity cards to "deserters" released by Karuna. Undocumented former soldiers face daunting challenges in protection and reintegration.

Children being caught up in recruitment drive

COLOMBO, 26 June 2004 – UNICEF says children are being indiscriminately recruited by the LTTE, which is violating commitments it made one year ago to end all child recruitment

After promising signs in April that the LTTE was taking seriously its pledge to release the children in its ranks, recruitment has been accelerated in recent weeks, including of children under the age of 18.

Since the start of April, UNICEF has received 159 reports of children being recruited by the LTTE, mostly in the North of the country. However, the East has also been affected by this and in Batticaloa and Ampara districts there have been 26 cases of new recruitment and 30 cases of re-recruitment in the past six weeks.

In April, the LTTE officially released 269 children and expressed a willingness to provide formal release letters for over 1,300 other children

who went home when Karuna disbanded his cadres.

"The April returns were a big step forward by the LTTE. However, this has been completely undermined by continued recruitment of new children over the past couple of months," said Mr. Chaiban, UNICEF's Representative in Sri Lanka. "This can not continue any longer. These children must be released immediately and steps taken at the highest levels of the LTTE to ensure children are no longer taken by the organization," he continued.

In June 2003, the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE jointly signed the Action Plan for Children Affected by War. The Action Plan was designed to provide development assistance to the North and East aimed at increasing opportunities for children to access education, quality health care, and skills training. One of the commitments made by the LTTE under the Action Plan was that they would stop recruiting children into its ranks, whether voluntarily or through coercion.

"The LTTE has not lived up to its commitment to end once and for all the practice of taking children into its ranks," said Mr. Chaiban. "A real and genuine effort must be made to exclude children from their recruitment drives. They must respect the commitments they have made."

"UNICEF has repeatedly asked the LTTE to release all the children in its ranks," said Mr. Chaiban. "We have also asked the LTTE to take a few simple steps such as ensuring that radio and trishaw announcements and pamphlets calling for recruitment specifically state that no one under the age of 18 will be accepted into the organization and that they require proof of age from all volunteers to ensure that no one under the age of 18 is recruited."

"None of these steps have been taken. These are easy things the LTTE could be doing to show the world they take the issue of child recruitment seriously," he added.

"This lack of cooperation has been very unfortunate, as the Action Plan has been successful in reuniting former child soldiers with their families and bringing much needed aid to children affected by the war," Mr. Chaiban said.

Since the beginning of this initiative, 998 children have been formally released by the LTTE. Over 32,000 children, including former child recruits, have enrolled in schools in the North East under UNICEF Catch-Up education programmes, and hundreds more have registered with their Departments of Education and will begin studies soon.

"The Action Plan has yielded real results for children in the North and East. It has provided a genuine mechanism for demobilizing children from the LTTE, as well as supporting other children made vulnerable by years of conflict," said Mr. Chaiban.

But parents and children remain afraid of recruitment, particularly in the East, and this has complicated efforts by international organizations to provide services to children, many of whom are too scared to take part in educational activities or vocational training.

"Without making it very clear that no one under 18 will be accepted, the LTTE has opened itself up to international criticism that it is targeting children in its recruitment campaign," he added. "Unfortunately, their ac-

tions over the past two months have proven this to be true."

Beating up families to recruit child soldiers

July 7 - The London-based international human rights organisation, Amnesty International, issued the following statement on 7 July 2004:

The Tamil Tigers are increasingly turning to threats and violence in a recruitment drive for child soldiers. Families who resist have been beaten with wooden sticks, or had their houses set on fire.

"With today's news of a suicide bombing in Colombo, the fact that the Tamil Tigers have started a new wave of child recruitment is alarming," said Amnesty International. "If the armed conflict were to resume, these children would likely be among the first to die."

Since the beginning of April 2004, 190 children have been recruited to fight, according to information provided by UNICEF. This brings the number of verified cases this year to 330.

Many of these children have been forcibly abducted from public places or their homes. Some of the new recruits are as young as fourteen.

The Tamil Tigers are also increasingly re-recruiting former child soldiers by force. In one case in May, four children who had left the Tamil Tigers were taken away from their homes in the middle of the night. Their families say they were violently assaulted when they tried to intervene.

In another case, Tamil Tigers set fire to a house in Sinnathatumunai, eastern Sri Lanka, and broke down the doors of nine others. In the eastern Vaharai area, relatives were beaten with wooden sticks when they tried to stop their children being taken away. In one instance a woman was knocked unconscious, and another was cut on the face. Both needed medical treatment.

"The Tamil Tigers leadership must issue orders to its cadres to stop these violent and intimidating tactics immediately," said Amnesty International. "It should stick to its earlier commitments to stop the recruitment and use of child soldiers. Children in its ranks should be returned to their homes and not face the threat of re-recruitment."

Last year over 1,200 children were enlisted as soldiers, but in June 2003 the Tamil Tigers promised to stop using children in a joint agreement, *Action Plan for Children affected by War.*

Background

Amnesty International is concerned about the intensification of the recruitment of children by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tamil Tigers), especially amid the fragile state of the peace process. Efforts by the Government of Norway to restart peace talks which stalled in April 2003 so far have not borne any results.

A variety of factors have dest-abilized the relationship between the Government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga Bandaranaike and the LTTE. One such factor has been by accusations by the LTTE that the military is supporting a former LTTE eastern commander, Colonel Karuna. Karuna, after internal fighting in mid-April, went underground with hundreds of LTTE members loyal to him. Other members, including many children, returned home. These are among the children reported as being re-recruited by the LTTE in the last few weeks.

The LTTE signed *Action Plan for Children Affected by War* in June 2003 together with the Sri Lankan government, UN agencies, and the Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation. ❑

EU ELECTION MONITORING MISSION

General Election 2004

The following is the statement made by the Chief Observer, John Cushnahan, of the Delegation of the European Commission which undertook montoring mission of the parliamentary election held in Sri Lanka in April this year:

This is the third occasion that I have been honoured to have been appointed the EU's Chief Observer for a general election in Sri Lanka On all three occasions my objective has been to protect the right of the voters of Sri Lanka to exercise their right to choose their government in an atmosphere free from violence and intimidation. I would like to pay tribute to them for their commitment to democracy and the fact that despite the problems that they faced they have always turned out in massive numbers to vote.

At the end of the 2000 and 2001 general elections I criticized the main political parties for failing to curb the excesses of some of their candidates and activists which resulted in unacceptable violence becoming part of the electoral contest. On this occasion the primary source of the violence was the LTTE who were determined to ensure that the TNA would emerge as the sole representative of the Tamil people. As a consequence, the LTTE motivated violence, denied the right of all parties to campaign freely in all parts of the country especially the North and East. While the TNA were the main political beneficiaries of the actions of the LTTE it would also be fair to acknowledge that they themselves have to some extent also been the victims of the LTTE intimidation.

In a freely fought contest the TNA would have in any case won a clear majority of seats in the North and East. However, it is also true to state that a small number of the seats that they obtained in this election were a direct consequence of the activities of the LTTE to manipulate the electoral results. Therefore, had the formation of a government been dependent on the "disputed seats", it's political legitimacy could well have been called into question. Steps must be taken to prevent the recurrence of this proposal. It is also important to point out that apart from LTTE violence there were also 2000 election related cases of violence reported. This is unacceptable in any democratic election and particularly in a country like Sri Lanka where there has been a proud tradition of democracy and universal for over 70 years long before many Member States of the European Union.

All political parties have a responsibility to take action to protect the integrity of Sri Lanka's democratic process. Our report makes a number of recommendations as to how this might be achieved. Regrettably some of these, although not all, are a repeat of the proposals we made in 2000 and 2001. I believe that if they have had been implemented, it would have prevented the recurrence of many of the problems that were a feature of the 2004 election.

The European Union has once again observed the general election process in Sri Lanka. We did so not on our own initiative but on the basis of an invitation from the Election Commissioner of Sri Lanka and Sri Lanka's political parties. We were delighted to do so.

However, I would like to issue a note of caution. Although I do not have a mandate to say so, it is my opinion that the EU would be unlikely to send another Election Observation Team in the future if our recommendations are not acted upon as has happened after the last two elections..

There are many demands placed on EU resources to assist the strengthening of democracy and human rights. In making decisions about how best to use these resources in the future, it is likely that priority would be given to countries that themselves take action to strengthen democratic institutions and protect human rights. ❑

RETURN OF THE SUICIDE BOMBER

Devananda survives another assassination bid

The Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) leader and Cabinet Minister Douglas Devananda survived another assassination bid on Wednesday, 7 July, when an alleged Tamil Tiger woman suicide bomber sought under false pretences to gain access to his office and kill him by detonating an explosive device she was wearing underneath her garments. However, the woman detonated the bomb dismembering herself and killing four others and injuring several others at the nearby police station in Kollupitiya in Colombo.

This suicide bomb blast explosion that sent shock waves through the city is the first major violent incident in Colombo since the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement in February 2002. The gravity of the incident was compounded by the fact that the bomb exploded in a high security zone within which the island's Prime Minister's official residence, 'Temple Trees' and the high profile US, British and Indian diplomatic missions are located.

According to police investigators, identified the suicide bomber from the National Identity Card in her possession as 26-year-old, Thiagarajah Jeyarani, a resident of Manipay in northern Jaffna, had gone to the offices of the Hindu Affairs Ministry on the morning of Wednesday, 7 July, ostensibly to meet Mr Douglas Devananda. The Ministry is situated in a nine storey building on the Galle Road in Kollupitiya in front of Temple Trees and adjoins the Colombo Swimming Club. The building also houses other ministries and government departments.

It has been the Minister's practice to see members of the public on Wednesdays. The woman-bomber Jeyarani had proceeded to the Minister's office on the second floor of the building and had been seated in the public area. She had sought an appointment with the Minister on the pretext of seeking a job. She had filled a form, which was compulsory for anyone who wants to meet the Minister. The details given in the form was accurate according to the details in her National Identity Card. However, when she was about to go and meet Minister Devananda, she was told to undergo the usual security check which, in the case of women, is normally carried out by a woman police constable. Around 10.55 a.m. Jeyarani was due to proceed to the Minister's office. The female security officer checking her had felt something suspicious around the woman's navel area and below. When questioned, the woman had said there was nothing, except that she was wearing a sanitary napkin. Then the security officer felt suspicious and had asked her to undress. When she refused protesting loudly and making a scene, the security officer had called her superior Ministerial Security Division (MSD) officer.

The MSD officer had also ordered her to undress for further examination, and the woman had again refused to do. Then the MSD personnel had taken her down to the ground floor amidst her noisy objections. When outside the building she had said she needed to complain to the police about the treatment meted out to her and had made an attempt to flee. Then the MSD personnel had persuaded her to get into a three-wheeler and taken her to the nearby Kollupitiya police station, which adjoins Temple Trees, the official residence of the Prime Minister.

The blast

Inside the police station a woman police constable had taken her in charge and questioned her. At the same time the suspicious police had proceeded to call the bomb disposal squad as well. As the woman PC told her that she would be subjected to a body-search, Jeyarani detonated the incendiary device she was wearing in the form of a jacket packed with explosives underneath her garments causing a massive explosion. At the devastated scene inside the police station the dismembered body of the suicide bomber was visible. There had been no damage to the upper part of her body.

In the explosion, four police officers were killed and several others injured and that part of the police station where the blast occurred was severely damaged. The Kollupitiya police station was a scene of destruction, with a blood-splattered wall and shattered windowpanes bearing a tragic testimony to the renewed mayhem. The premises of the police station were cordoned off as sleuths swung into work, picking up shreds of evidence from among human and explosive remains.

Among the ten injured were two civilians who had come to the police station for personal matters. Among the other injured were three WPCs, two MSD personnel and two police constables. The condition of several of the wounded was said to be serious. Those who died in the bomb explosion are IP Ekanayake, Sergeant Attygalle and PCs Liyanage and Ajith, all attached to the Kollupitiya police.

Special Task Force commandant DIG Nimal Lewke said the bomb was of a new variety and was different from the earlier bombs used by LTTE suicide cadres. Meanwhile, Deputy Government Analyst W. D. G. S. Gunatilake said according to initial inquiries, the suicide bomber had used a new type of suicide kit which had no shoulder belts like the ones used previously. He said the jacket contained a smaller amount of explosives apparently to hit the specific target only. "That is a reason why the casualties were low this time," Mr. Gunatilake said.

Narrow escape

The latest suicide attack by the Tigers was the 68th and so far 262 LTTE cadres have died during such suicide attacks.

EPDP leader Douglas Devananda, who was the target of the latest assassination bid by the Tamil Tigers, had narrowly escaped several previous attempts on his life. He owes his narrow escape on this occasion also to the alertness of the security staff.

Investigations have revealed that Minister Douglas Devananda had escaped by a whisker as he had been only about six meters away from the suicide bomber and separated by a partition. "The Minister was saved because the bomber did not know that her target was about six meters away and only a partition separated them," he said.

A defiant Devananda charged the LTTE had once again exhibited its fascist tendencies by trying to kill him but said the LTTE should understand that problems could not be solved by assassinations. "The Tigers have realised that I am the main obstacle for them to achieve their fascist separatist objectives but my journey cannot be deterred by such attempts.

I will take forward my political programmes with much vigour and it won't be easy to silence me," Mr. Devananda said expressing his condolences to the families of the dead and injured policemen.

A report in the *'The Hindu'* newspaper quoted Douglas Devananda as urging the LTTE leader, V. Prabakaran, to "abandon the wrong path, if he was keen on the interests of the Tamil people, and come into the political mainstream," adding "I am willing to forgive this'" and offering to "step aside from competitive politics," if Prabakaran took to the political mainstream. "My appeal to him is to meet ideology with ideology, politics with politics, ideas with ideas, arguments with arguments and not through killing," he said

Mr. Devananda appealed to the President Kumaratunga, not to be distracted by the attempt on his life and "to continue undeterred with the peace process and find a solution through the peace process."

Later when he was asked about the denial by the Tigers of any involvement in the recent bomb attack in Colombo, pointing out that the LTTE had never accepted responsibility for assassinations in the past Devananda said, "They killed former Indian Prime Mnister Rajiv Gandhi. They killed President R. Premadasa. They murdered Amirthalingam and Yogeswaran and several other leaders. They almost succeeded in assassinating President Chandrika Kumaratunga. But have they accepted responsibility for any of these crimes? They simply keep their mouth shut."

Condemnation

The government condemned the suicide bomb attack that caused tragic loss of lives, saying the perpetrators were reverting to violence as a means of settling disputes showing little concern to human lives. The government in a statement said, "A female suicide bomber detonated an explosive device within the precincts of the Kollupitiya Police Station, mid-day on July 7, killing two Police personnel, two security assistants, injuring another seven Police personnel and three civilians.

"The Government strongly condemns this attempted assassination through a targeted suicide mission, and the tragic loss of lives caused as a consequence. The perpetrators of this act show callous disregard for human lives and are reverting to violence as a means of settling disputes.

"The Government commends the high state of alertness of the Police and Security Forces, and wishes to reiterate its commitment to the maintenance of public security. The Government expresses its profound sympathies to the families of the Police personnel and other security personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty."

While regretting the incident, President Kumaratunga observed that the peace process fell into a much broader category to be derailed by a mere incident of this nature. The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the major component in the ruling United Peoples Freedom Alliance government, said that the suicide bomb blast in Colombo would not cause any adverse impact on the peace process and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. The General Secretary of the SLFP Mr.Maithiri-pala Sirisena said that the suicide bomber had targeted Minister Douglas Devananda. But the peace process and the ceasefire implementation would go on as usual. The UPFA government has committed itself to take forward the peace process, the SLFP statement further said.

The Liberation Tigers denied any involvement in the suicide attack in Colombo. On 8 July the Tigers had "absolutely no connection in the suicide bombing in Colombo". "This is an act to destabilize the peace process. We suspect this has been carried out by elements that want to disrupt the peace process. We strongly condemn this act, which could confuse the people who are hoping for peace and disrupt the prevailing peaceful environment," the LTTE said. However, the LTTE sought to rationalise the circumstances in which the bomb attack occurred. "We are suspecting that it is the granting of refuge to these groups and the permission given to them to act freely in Colombo that has paved the way for yesterday's attack in Colombo," adding that a "peaceful environment can be preserved only if the military intelligence wing and the security forces halt all assistance given to these armed groups." In other words, according to the Tigers, the provocation for the attack was the alleged support that the military was giving the breakaway Karuna group.

The United States condemned the suicide bomb attack in Colombo called on the LTTE to give up terrorism. "Although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the incident bears the hallmarks of an LTTE attack," the US embassy said in a statement. "The US has consistently called on the Tigers to renounce terrorism and cease terrorist acts, including political assassinations, and to comply with the terms of the ceasefire agreement that it signed," the embassy said. The US embassy also asked the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tigers to take all steps to halt the recent violence in the east of the island.

The Presidency of the European Union expressed concern about the recent increase in political violence in Sri Lanka, including the political killings in the East and elsewhere and the suicide bomb attack on July 7, the first since the ceasefire began.

"The EU condemns all forms of political violence. There is no excuse for such violence which can never resolve the internal differences in Sri Lanka," it said.

"The vast majority of Sri Lankans - from all communities - simply desire peace for themselves and for their children. The political violence we have seen recently will make it more difficult to restart substantive negotiations towards peace and to deliver on the simple demand from the majority of Sri Lanka's citizens for peace and security."

"The Presidency of the European Union calls upon all parties to prevent further violent incidents and welcomes that all sides continue to respect the ceasefire. We urge all parties to continue to work towards the restart of substantive talks. Only through dialogue can there be a negotiated settlement to the conflict. We reaffirm the EU's support for a solution which meets the aspirations of all communities in Sri Lanka, including the protection of human rights."

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission said it was too early to conclude whether yesterday's suicide bomb attack was a violation of the Ceasefire Agreement but said the incident would certainly sour relations between the government and the LTTE. According to the Ceasefire Agreement signed between the government and the LTTE the two parties are required to effect a complete cessation of all hostilities including suicide missions. SLMM spokesperson Disa Finnboga said they were conducting a full scale probe into the incident and two officials had already visited the scene. She said the SLMM was in contact with the Colombo Peace Secretariat and the LTTE.

The accomplice confesses

A few hours after the blast, police arrested another suspected LTTE woman cadre, said to be the accomplice of the suicide bomber. In the course interroga-

tion of the accomplice, Sathyaleela Selvakumar, 29, of Jaffna, by the police, she is reported to have told detectives that she had worked at the EPDP Jaffna office, as an LTTE mole, for more than one and half years until last April, in a bid to monitor movements of Minister Devananda. She was paid Rs. 7,000 per month by the EPDP leader while working in the EPDP office. A few days before the April 2 General Elections, the Mr Devananda had told her that her service were no longer needed and terminated her employment. Sathyaleela had gone to Colombo and kept in touch with the EPDP leader who had assisted her financially on several occasions even after her services were terminated. She kept monitoring the Minister's movements by visiting the Ministry at Kollupitiya about three times. On Wednesday morning Sathyaleela had met Jeyarani, the suicide bomber, for the first time at a lodge in Dam Street in Colombo and helped her to wear the suicide jacket. "She had guided the suicide cadre to the ministry office and disappeared after instructing her to blow herself up at the target," a detective said. Investigations also revealed that the LTTE had selected Sathyaleela, now in police custody, to accompany the woman suicide bomber as she was able to gain access to Minister Devananda's office because of her past connections with the EPDP leader.

The CID produced Sathyaleela Selvakumar, the accomplice of the suicide bomber before Colombo Fort Magistrate and Additional District Judge Sarath C. Karunaratne on 8 July. When she made a request to make a confession in connection with the incident, the Judge gave her several hours to decide whether she wanted to make a voluntary confession.

Later, the Judge recorded her confession which took nearly three and a half hours. On an application by the CID, the Judge remanded the woman till July 22.

The suicide bomber

According to inquiries, the woman suicide bomber responsible for the recent bomb blast at the Kollupitiya police station in Colombo had stayed for over one-and-half years having found employment as a maid-servant at the Colombo residence of a UNP politician who unsuccessfully contested the Kandy district at the general election in April this year.

The bomber had gained employment there several months after the Oslo-arranged Ceasefire Agreement came into effect in February, 2002. "She is what we call a 'sleeping agent' ready to swing into action at short notice," a senior security official said, expressing the belief that she could be just one among the many LTTE's 'primed assets' in the city and its suburbs. Unlike previous occasions, they may have found employment with affluent families as part of their cover, he said.

The politician concerned got in touch with the CID after seeing the bomber's photograph in newspapers. Police said the photograph was the one on her national identity card. The police commended the politician for coming forward.

Police said the bomber got the job as maidservant with the help of a middle-aged woman in Colombo. The CID investigating the attempt on Devananda's life had questioned the woman to ascertain whether she was involved in the assassination plot and clandestine LTTE operations. It is learnt that the woman's son was married from the Mullaitivu district. She had claimed that the suicide bomber had got in touch with her through her son over one and half years ago. She had vehemently denied her involvement in the assassination plot. She had also insisted that her son too was not involved in illegitimate activity. The CID released her after recording her statement, adding that the woman had supplied servants to many residents in Colombo and its suburbs.

PEOPLE & POLITICS

● **Exhibition of war and peace photos:**

June 30 - The Foreign Correspondents' Association (FCA) of Sri Lanka held an exhibition of photographs by five photojournalists starting Wednesday, 30 June at the Barefoot Gallery in Colombo. "The photos are of war and peace in the island, taken over the many years of conflict as well as in the past two-and-a-half years since the Tigers and Colombo signed a cease-fire", the FCA said. The five photojournalists are members of the FCA.

"The photo exhibition portrays the death, destruction, grief and hardship of the war contrasting with the images of hope and renewal during the largely-peaceful atmosphere of the recent past", the FCA states.

" The exhibition is an opportunity to stand back and look at how far Sri Lanka has come since the 2002 ceasefire - to take stock of just how important it is to nurture this fragile peace," says CNN Correspondent Kasra Naji who is the President of the FCA.

The five photographers are: Anuruddha Lokuhapuarachchi, Reuters' photographer; Dominic Sansoni, who works as a freelancer for a range of international magazines including Time; Gemunu Amarasinghe, photographer with AP; Sena Vidanagama staff photographer of Agence France Press; and Syriantha Walpola, the photographer of the Indian newspaper The Hindu who has recently joined the BBC team in Colombo.

"The exhibition is also a display of local talent. It is an opportunity to give long-overdue recognition to the work, sometimes in very dangerous circumstances, of some of the finest photo-journalists around who are all members of the FCA and who happen to be Sri Lankans," Mr. Naji said.

The photos on display have been seen in many newspapers and magazines around the world. But this is the first time a large collection of them will be seen in Sri Lanka.

"I hope the exhibition will also serve to bring home to the younger generation that photojournalism is a worthy profession they may want to pursue," Mr. Naji said. The exhibition has been sponsored by Agence France Press (AFP), ART TV, the financial newsagency Bloomberg, BBC News, CNN, UNHCR and UNICEF.

● **History in danger of disappearing:**

June 22 - Environmentalists warn that unchecked vandalism and neglect is destroying thousands of ancient rock caves in Sri Lanka dating back to 30,500 BC, with scores of Buddha statues rendered headless, and paintings defaced. In the absence of a detailed survey, it is believed there are between 3000-4000 caves of historic importance in the country, bearing testimony to its ancient history and religion. At a special meeting of the cultural

ministry of the central Sabaragamuwa province recently, former Director General of Archaeology, Dr Shiran Deraniyagala, declared that unless the authorities take immediate action to save the caves, important historical evidence will soon be gone. He alleged there was an orchestrated move to destroy archaeological sites to remove precious artefacts. One of the most priceless relics here is a female body remains in Bulathsinhala, in Kalutara district in the Western province, which testifies to the consumption of rice, maize and salt. This body remains embedded in a rock dates back to 30,500 BC and is considered the world's oldest proof of consumption of rice, maize and salt. The rock cave is named after the famous Chinese Buddhist monk Fa-Hien who travelled in India and Sri Lanka from AD 399 to 414. He is said to have stayed in this cave for the major part of his sojourn in Sri Lanka. *(One World South Asia)*

● Lanka, a wedding destination

23 June - The UK based Scotsman.com reported yesterday that Sri Lanka has emerged as the top wedding destination for Britons marrying abroad.

Plagued in the past by civil war, the now peaceful Sri Lanka pipped the US and Mauritius to come top of the wedding destination table compiled by long-haul holiday specialist Kuoni.

The table was published as the company launched its latest wedding brochure which features, for the first time, such destinations as Cuba, Dubai, South Africa and Canada. Deals include a Canadian Rocky Mountain package including a break at spectacular Lake Louise in Alberta as well as a dune driving safari as part of a wedding package in Dubai.

Kuoni managing director Sue Biggs said: "We have noticed a marked increase in our wedding bookings as wedding abroad become more popular as well as more destinations offering wedding ceremonies." Kuoni's top 10 wedding destinations are: 1. Sri Lanka, 2. USA, 3. Mauritius, 4. St. Lucia, 5. Antigua, 6. Jamaica, 7. Barbados, 8. Australia, 9. Fiji, 10. Thailand.

● Book to honour Justice Mark Fernando

"Selected Essays and Extracts from Judgments by Justice Mark Fernando", a book published by the Faculty of Taxation of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (ICASL), will be launched recently in Colombo. The book contains a collection of speeches Justice Fernando delivered at convocations of universities or professional organisations and commemoration ceremonies. This book also contains extracts from judgments delivered by Justice Mark Fernando in addition to some hitherto unpublished articles.

The book is being presented as a collector's item and a few copies were made available for sale at Rs.500 on the day of launch.

● Sinhala books on Tamil struggle:

July 20 - Two books in the Sinhala language, "Vanniye sita liyuma" (A letter from Vanni) and "Handak Nathiyunge Hathawatha Sakshiye Handa" (Voice from the heart of the Silent) describing the Tamil liberation struggle for the first time, were released at a book launch in Vavuniya, Sunday, 20 June.

The books are a compilation of a series of articles written in Sinhala monthly "Dedunne" (Rainbow) by Senior member of the LTTE, V.Balakumaran and Appa. Rainbow is published by the Political Division of the Liberation Tigers.

The book release event was presided over by the Vavuniya Head of LTTE Political Wing, Gnanavel. Ms.Alai, S.Thirunavukkarasu, Prof.Harasita Hamlath and V.Balakumaran spoke and participated in the event.

● Clare Short to deliver Tiruchelvam lecture

The annual Neelan Tiruchelvam Memorial lecture organized by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies and held on July 29 every year will be delivered in October 9 this year by Clare Short, British Member of Parliament.

This is the fifth in the series of lectures. The title of the lecture will be "Justice and Human Rights for All - The Key to Peace and a Sustainable World". The lecture will be held on Saturday, October 9 at 6 p.m. in the Committee Room A, BMICH Building, in Colombo.

● New Indian Envoy to Sri Lanka:

July 8 - Nirupama Menon Rao, currently additional secretary in charge of administration in the External Affairs Ministry of the Government of India has been appointed as the High Commissioner to Sri Lanka. She becomes the first Indian woman to hold this post in Sri Lanka. Ms.Rao's appointment comes at a sensitive time when India is attempting to define its quiet but important role in helping Sri Lanka's search for ethnic peace. Ms.Rao succeeds Mr Nirupam Sen, who has been elevated to the psot of Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations. After joining the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1973, she was posted to Russia, the USA, China, South America and Europe, in addition to countries in the Asian sub-continent. In South America she served as an Ambassador in Lima.

Ms.Rao excelled in graduate and post-graduate levels at Mount Carmel College, Bangalore, and Marathwada University, Aurangabad. Ms.Rao says that she has been writing poetry since she was 12, and recently published her first poetry collection, "Rain Rising".

● Anti-Conversion Bill

June 18 - Based on a proposal submitted by Buddha Sasana Minister Mr.Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, the government decided to table a draft bill in Sri Lanka Parliament prohibiting 'unethical' conversion of religion, UPFA spokesman Mr. Mangala Samaraweera said at a press briefing.

Meanwhile, the Jathika Hela Urumaya (JHU) has already drafted a private members' bill titled "Prohibition of Forcible Conversion of Religion." JHU parliamentarian Venerable Omalpe Sobitha Thera has proposed in this draft bill that an imprisonment of not exceeding five years and a fine not exceeding Rs 150,000 should be imposed on a person found guilty of using force, allurement or fraudulent means to convert a person to another religion.

The JHU proposed bill further states that a person found guilty of converting a minor, a woman, Samurdhi beneficiary, prison inmates, inmates of rehabilitation centres and detention centers, physically and mentally disabled, employees of an organization, members of the armed forces or police, students, inmates of hospitals and or places of healing and refugee camps and any other category as may be prescribed by the relevant Minister by regulations will have to serve an imprisonment not exceeding seven years and also be liable to a fine not exceeding Rs 500,000.

● No bail for monks

July 7 - A Judge of the High Court has told a lawyer to produce to courts four

Buddhist monks who were allegedly involved in attacking an Assembly of God religious centre at Talpitiya, Panadura in south-west Sri Lanka

"Peace and harmony among people must prevail. Nobody should be allowed to breach the peace in this country and attack religious institutions," the Judge said. High Court Judge A. Samith de Silva made this observation when the lawyer appearing for the four monks, Ven. Dr. Rahula Thera, Ven. Talpitiye Chandraratne Thera, Ven. Dhammika Thera and Ven. Nelumdande Dhammaratne Thera submitted an anticipatory bail application on their behalf.

Rejecting the application for bail, Judge further said according to the police investigations report submitted to the Panadura Magistrate the four monks along with 250 people had allegedly attacked the religious centre and a police jeep. He said the Magistrate on considering the police report had ordered the Wadduwa police to arrest the four monks and others involved in the incident. Adding that the Magistrate's order was justifiable the Judge asked the lawyer to surrender the four monks to court without further delay.

● Indian HC denies report on extradition:

July 11 - The High Commission of India has denied a news report which appeared in the press that the new Indian government had made a request to Sri Lanka to extradite LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and its intelligence chief Pottu Amman.

According to Indian High Commission sources, the Indian government has clearly stated its position on the extradition of Prabhakaran and Pottu Amman in connection with the killing of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. India's External Affairs Ministry in its recent statement, said the question of extradition was not the priority of New Delhi as it did not want to upset the peace process. It also states that an independent Tamil Eelam was totally unacceptable to India, that the ethnic crisis should be solved through negotiations and that the solution must be acceptable to all. Indian Deputy High Commissioner Mohan Kumar told the press that the story carried in a Colombo newspaper that the new Indian Government had made a formal request to the Sri Lankan Government in this regard was completely false. "There has been no such request from the new Government and the Indian High Commissioner Mr Nirupam Sen did not make any statement in this connection," he said.

● University Don's Firing Challenged

On an application by the Citizens' Movement for Good Governance, July, the Court of Appeal on Friday, 9 issued a writ in the public interest staying Prof. K. G. A. Goonesekera, University of Peradeniya's Vice Chancellor, from terminating without a proper inquiry S. R. H. Hoole, Professor of Electrical and Electronics Engineering at Peradeniya and Member of the University Grants Commission. It is ironic that the UGC is the parent body overseeing the Vice Chancellor!

Professor Hoole had alleged "a massive conspiracy" by the VC, Dean Engineering and Senate and Council nominees to selection committees in making fraudulent promotions of favourites. In particular he had pointed out several claims in the application of Dr. K. S. Walgama to the post of Professor of Engineering Mathematics that he alleged were obviously false.

These, he alleged, selection committee members pretended not to see. Instead of looking into the allegations, the Council had issued a hasty charge sheet against him with several mistakes and violations of basic procedure as pointed out by CIMOGG.

In its petition CIMOGG states that if this kind of charge of harassing those who complain is allowed, no one would ever dare complain and public interest would be ill served.

The CIMOGG Petition further states that it has itself filed a Court of Appeal case on the promotion of Dr. Walgama after Prof. Hoole had raised it with several authorities who took no interest though it was their duty.

The petition further avers that Professor Hoole, the only person with a western higher doctorate in service in Sri Lanka, is the most qualified member of the entire university system and yet, now in his fifth year of service, has not been confirmed after the statutory 3 years of probation and has been denied the Senior Professorship although he is qualified under 3 different career paths.

The petition argues that if Prof. Hoole who gave up a lucrative position abroad to return and serve the country is treated like this, other accomplished Sri Lankans will learn of his experience "and be deterred from returning to Sri Lanka, offering fresh insights and speaking up without fear on matters public as true Professionals should and as all right thinking Sri Lankans want them to, for the common good."

H. L. de Silva, PC, is the patron of CIMOGG. H. S. Wanasinghe, formerly of CCS and UNESCAP and C. T. Jansz, formerly Commissioner of Prisons and Chairman of the Human Rights Taskforce, President and Secretary respectively of CIMOGG, were the petitioners. Senior Counsel Elmore Perera, formerly Surveyor General, and now Vice President of CIMOGG, was the instructing attorney.

● Eastern university dons trying to flee:

July 13 - Frightened by intimidation and death threats due to the increasing violence in the eastern Sri Lanka as the fighting between the LTTE and its breakaway rebel Karuna faction intensifies, around ten senior lecturers of the Eastern University are seeking to flee the country on the pretext of Sabbatical leave, reports from Colombo said.

A university spokesman told a Colombo daily that these lecturers were trying to leave as they worked in fear after the Commerce Faculty Dean Kumaravel

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Thambaiah was shot dead by unidentified attackers at his residence in Gnanasooriya Square in Batticaloa on May 24. Mr. Thambaiah is thought to have been murdered by cadres of the renegade LTTE commander, Karuna. He had fled the Batticaloa district after the Karuna faction ordered all people originally from Jaffna to vacate the Eastern Province. He returned after the LTTE crushed Karuna's rebellion in an offensive over the Easter weekend.

"Now there is no threat to these Jaffna-born lecturers. But they fear possible danger to their lives. That's why they are leaving the country," the spokesman told the Daily Mirror. Normally university dons with ten years' experience can go abroad on Sabbatical leave at the expense of the University Grants Commission. They can take their families with them. However, the Commission will not normally allow such numbers to leave at the same time as that would disrupt teaching in the university.

● **who didn't like the smell**

July 15 - A doctor is alleged to have walked away without treating a woman patient admitted to Kuliyapitiya Base Hospital in southern Sri Lanka allegedly telling that he couldn't stand the repulsive odour emanating from the patient's oil soaked head. Later the unfortunate patient died at the Colombo National Hospital.

This was revealed by a witness at the inquest held by City Coroner recently into the death of Herath Mudiyansege Sadimenike (47) of Kuliyapitiya. Giving evidence at the inquest, the deceased's husband, Wilbert Chandraratne of Kuliyapitiya said that the deceased was a reputed social worker who held prominent posts in many organizations, and a mother of three children, of whom one was an undergraduate.

The deceased was suffering from high blood pressure for about six months but after treatment she partly recovered. However she continued to suffer from severe headaches. One night she became restless and medicinal oil was applied to her head to alleviate the headache. She was later taken to Bingiriya and Katupotha Hospitals and then to the Kuliyapitiya Base Hospital.

The deceased was admitted to ward No. 50 of that hospital. However, the medical officer who was to examine her walked away saying that the "patient's head was smelling of oil", the witness informed Court. Later, the patient was transferred to the Colombo National Hospital after a delay of nine hours due to the non-availability of an ambulance. The patient died after surgery at the Colombo National Hospital.

End Piece

The UNDP's latest Human Development Report says the annual dairy subsidy in the EU is $913 per cow, which is almost double the per capita income of sub-Saharan Africa of $490 and 114 times the annual per capita aid given by the EU to this region. Japan even subsidizes $2,700 per year for each cow. The US spends $10.7 mn per day subsidising its cotton farmers, which is three times the total aid given to sub-Saharan Africa. Altogether, rich countries spend around $311 bn subsidising their farmers, against $52 bn they give in aid to all countries. In other words, if the rich countries stopped all aid, but removed farm subsidies and allowed developing and underdeveloped countries to export their farm products, the latter would benefit six times more. Experts claim that, if industrialised countries reduce their import tariffs by 50 per cent, it would lead to growth prosperity in developing countries as much as US $150 bn a year. ❑

NEWS TRACK

Two farm workers killed: June 19 - Two farm workers, Kandakutti Mylvaganam of Kirankulam, and Devamani Kuttickannan of Rajapuram Marpalam, were hacked to death in Eravur Pattu Navundaniya madhu on Friday 18 June, security sources said. The coconut estate where both worked is maintained by the Tamil Tigers, and it has been speculated that members Karuna faction of the LTTE was involed in the killing.

"SLA is giving shelter to Karuna": June 19 – "We have confirmed reports that the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) is giving shelter to Karuna and that the Sri Lanka military is trying to use him against the Liberation Tigers," said Special LTTE Commander for Batticaloa- Ampara, Col.Ramesh speaking to reporters at a press conference held in Thenagam in Kokkadicholai in eastern Sri Lanka. "If the Sri Lanka government tries to wage war against us making use of Karuna, there will be serious repercussions and we will not hesitate to take appropriate action," he said.

Col.Ramesh said that four senior women cadres including the military and political wing leaders who were with Karuna have rejoined the LTTE early this week. He said that these cadres will very soon disclose details about Karuna's action when these cadres address the reporters soon in a press conference. Ramesh added that although certain incidents have taken place in the cleared areas, including shooting death of members of the LTTE, these incidents will be brought to a halt very soon.

Refugees rescued in Mannar Sea: June 23 - Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) this morning rescued 26 persons from seven Tamil refugee families returning from Rameswaram in South India from a sandbank in Talaimannar Sea. All Refugees originally displaced from Gurunagar, a suburb in Jaffna town during the war were left on a sandbank in the sea by the crew of an Indian boat, Police said.

One of the refugees said they left Rameswaram the previous night at about 8 p.m. in an Indian boat having paid an exorbitant fee. They added that the Indian crew left them on the sandbank stating that they had arrived in Mannar coast. A SLN craft in its routine night patrol spotted these refugees shouting for help. SLN personnel in the craft took them into their custody and brought them to the shore.

Rs. 140 m Japanese grant: July 24 - The Japanese Government has made a Rs.140 million grant to the Government to uplift the living conditions of the farmer community of the North-East areas. The Japanese Ambassador Akio Sudo handed over this grant to Agriculture and Lands Deputy Minister Bimal Ratnayake at a ceremony held at Plant Genetic Resources Centre, Gannoruwa recently. The Japanese Ambassador said the intention of his Government to provide this loan was to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the rural farmer community, particularly those in the north-east areas. He said the new UPFA Government and its two agriculture ministers have the ability of developing the coun-

try's agriculture sphere. "We are very keen on Sri Lanka's rural economic development.The Agriculture sector has played a leading role to develop a country like Sri Lanka. In order to develop local agriculture, the Sri Lankan Government has implemented several projects," he said.

HALO Trust's property set ablaze: June 25 - Several vehicles including Canter trucks and jeeps belonging to the 'Halo Trust' in Jaffna were burnt or damaged when unidentified men stormed its office premises in the early hours on 23 June, police officials in the northern town said. Around 28 vehicles were damaged by the hooded gang which entered the organization's office around 2.30 a.m. assaulting three workers who were on site. The reason for the destruction of the vehicles is not known. However, reports in Colombo newspapers quoting annonimous sources said that the attack could not have taken place without the knowledge and backing of the LTTE, adding that the Trust had been under pressure from the LTTE to shift its office to Trincomalee.

According to the HALO Trust, the total damage caused to their property and vehicles had been estimated at Rs. 1.2 billion. S. Selvarasa, 51, a security guard at the vehicle park was admitted to Jaffna hospital after being assaulted by the attackers. Another employee attached to the HALO Trust on his way to the work place had also been assaulted by members of the gang which numberd over 20 persons.

Exhibitions, plays, processions, demonstrations and other activities were being held as part of UNICEF supported Mine Risk Education (MRE) Week between 21 June and 27 June across the NorthEast province. It was intrgueing that the attack on the Halo Trust office and its property should have occurred during this week.

The Halo Trust is a British demining charity engaged in mine clearing activities in Jaffna. The Halo trust is one of the world's largest demining organisations. It began operating in Sri Lanka following the 2002 cease-fire between government forces and the Tamil Tigers. The Halo Trust's funding comes from various government's including those of Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, Japan, Canada, as well as private donations. The charity was famously endorsed by Princess Diana in 1997shortly before her death.

An official of the Halo Trust said de-mining activities of the group have come to a halt following this incident. Officials of 'Halo Trust' have lodged a complaint at the Jaffna Police and later to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) in Jaffna and to the Jaffna District Political Secretariat of LTTE regarding the incident.

Colombo treatment for wounded Tigers: June 25 - Four senior LTTE cadres, who were injured in the recent clashes between the Prabhakaran and Karuna factions in the Thoppigala jungles, have been brought to Colombo and are undergoing treatment at a private hospital, The Island newspaper reported on 25 June..

The Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was instrumental in bringing them to Colombo and putting them up at a five star hotel under police protection. They were taken to hospital on 24 June amidst tight security, the report said.

The Ministerial Security Division (MSD) has been detailed to protect these cadres who are believed to be stalked by hit squads of Karuna, the renegade military commander of the LTTE. On a previous occasion too the Norwegian-led truce monitors went out of their way to bring wounded Wanni cadres to Colombo without much publicity for treatment at private hospitals and send them back to Kilinochchi after recovery, the report added.

LTTE-SLA talks recommence: June 25 - Only a day after the LTTE said it was discontinuing the practice of having regular meetings with the security forces in protest against alleged government harbouring of its dissident renegade eastern Commander Col. Karuna, the LTTE on 24 June agreed to resume its regular meetings with the Sri Lankan Army in Batticaloa and Ampara, according to Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission spokesperson Disa Finnboga. She said an LTTE delegation would meet the STF and the police in Akkaraipattu the following day.

At a news conference on 24 June government spokesman Mangala Samaraweera denied any direct or indirect government involvement in providing safe passage to Karuna. "We will not do anything to jeopardise the peace process and we believe peace can be achieved only through negotiations," he said. "You can't have breakaway factions at the negotiation table," he said adding that Karuna or any other group could submit their views to the peace process. The Minister also said, "We are duty bound to provide security to any citizen whose life is under threat. That offer stands, but the internal conflicts in the LTTE must be resolved within," he said.

Grenade thrown at LTTE office: June 26 - A grenade was thrown outside the LTTE office in Kalmunai 25 June, the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission said. SLMM Media Spokesman Hagrup Haukland told journalists that no one was hurt in the incident and no damage was caused to property. No person or organisation has claimed responsibility while investigations were pending.

Batticalo woman killed in Colombo: June 26 - A 28-year-old woman from Batticaloa in eastern Sri Lanka, who had rented out an upstair flat at Gunasinghapura, Colombo, was found dead with her throat slit in the flat. The victim was identified as Selvi. Police said that there were no other injuries on the corpse and no evidence of a struggle at the murder scene.

ASP Premalal Ranagala said the woman had come into occupation of the flat about one and a half months back and had been in close association with one other person. Police suspect that Selvi, an unmarried woman, could have been a victim of the ongoing internecine conflict between the LTTE and its rebel Karuna faction.

STF refutes LTTE allegations: June 27 - The Special Task Force (STF) of the Sri Lankan military has accused the LTTE of being engaged in an organised campaign to discredit its commandos deployed in the Ampara-Batticaloa region. "They are blaming us for Friday's grenade attack on a 'political office' at Kalawanchikudy. We don't deny the fact that there was a grenade blast at a closed office. But it would be absurd to accuse us of carrying out the attack," a senior officer said. The STF is said to have informed the SLMM of the LTTE strategy. "While blaming the police and the security forces for jeopardising the Cease-Fire Agreement, LTTE cadres were engaged in organised terror in government held-areas in the north-east," the officer said.

The official said Tigers were furious with STF police commandos for rescuing a Karuna loyalist while he was being taken to the LTTE-held area. Police commandos deployed at Akkaraipattu saved Sivagu Devakumar. They also arrested the two cadres who abducted Devakumar. The suspects were produced before the local Magistrate but were given bail, he said.

Vavuniya resident shot dead: June 28 - K. Thevaraj, 49 years old, identified as an ex-PLOTE member and a father of two children, was shot dead by unknown gunmen 7.30 pm Sunday 27 June while he was riding his bicycle along Pattakadu Road in Ganesapuram Vavuniya, according to the Vavuniya Police. A military source said the two suspected LTTE cadres who came on a motor bicycle had gunned down Mr. Devaraja, who was returning

from a friend's house on a push bicycle. The victim, a resident of Pattakulam, was a daily paid labourer in Vavuniya. The victim's brother-in-law also contested several elections on the PLOTE ticket. Vavuniya police said the victim had received several death threats from the LTTE recently. Police said the attackers had used a pistol for the killing and one empty 9.9 m cartridge was recovered from the scene.

LTTE threatens boycott of truce meetings: June 28 -: The LTTE said that it would boycott truce monitoring meetings with the Sri Lankan military until it stopped harbouring breakaway rebel leader V. Muralitharan, also known as Karuna. "The future of the ceasefire agreement and the peace talks is not in our hands now," LTTE's political wing leader S.P. Thamilselvan told reporters on Monday 28 June.

"It is in the hands of the Sri Lankan army, truce monitors and the Norwegian (peace) facilitators," he said.

The Tigers made their position clear to Norwegian-led truce monitors who went to Kilinochchi for emergency talks to protect the ceasefire that has been in place since February 2002. "The Liberation Tigers will not recommence meetings with the Sri Lanka army while the government and its military continue to harbour Karuna and continue to instigate murder and confusion in (the eastern district of) Batticaloa," Thamilselvan was quoted as saying in the Tamilnet website. Diplomatic sources said the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) was deeply concerned with the Tiger withdrawal on the eve of fresh attempts by peace broker Norway to get the stalled negotiations back on track.

Project to support street children: June 29 - The Colombo City alone harbours 3,000 street children, according to a National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) study. The study also revealed that between 20 to 30 children leave their street life daily to take up work as labourers and other menial jobs. NCPA's Child and Youth Centre set up at Pettah provides shelter to these street children.

NCPA Chairman Dr. Harendra de Silva has started a program with World Bank assistance to protect, entertain and provide recreational facilities for Colombo's street children including those living in shanties. According to Prof. de Silva, categorising children is entirely unjustifiable and every child should be treated equally. Special attention is being paid to male children. Any child aged below 18 can visit these centres.

The NCPA will open five more child and youth centres in Beruwala, Uswetakeiyawa, Hikkaduwa, Weligama and Anuradhapura. These Child and Youth Centres will provide education, vocational training on handicrafts, fabric painting and printing. The centres will be staffed by experienced teachers. Equipment worth Rs.400,000 including musical instruments, facilities for indoor games, computers, television, radio, video and other electric appliances and kitchen utensils will be provided for each centre.

Leaflet warns anti-social elements: June 29 – "We will not hesitate to punish anti-social elements in our society and traitors who act against our national struggle," said a group callling themselves Special Forces of Pandaravanniyan, in a leaflet distributed in Vavuniya district, sources said.

The leaflet warned, "Those who are being manipulated by our enemy who is using available tactics in military intelligence to engage in activities that aim to create division among our people and to destroy our struggle that has achieved unprecedented success, need to be aware that they are acts are traitorous and deserve no pardon. In particular, gang activities and harrassing passersby in road junctions, sexual harrassment and prostitution, dealing with pornographic material and consumption of alcohol, underage drinking and smoking, and stealing will be regarded as anti-social. We warn these people to desist from engaging in these activities and lead a path to a prosperous future."

7 Karuna cadres arrested: June 30 - Batticaloa-Amparai district secretariat of the Liberation Tigers (LTTE) said today that they had arrested seven cadres belonging to renegade Karuna group who were working with the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Intelligence. Some of the arrested were functioning in the LTTE controlled area of Thikkodai and Thumabankerni, and the remaining cadres were operating in the SLA controlled areas of Kakuvanjikudi, Kaluthavalai and Kallaru, according to a memorandum released by the LTTE.

Hand guns, grenades, communication sets and hand phones were recovered from their hideouts. The renegade group functioned without the knowledge of Sri Lanka Special Task Force (STF) soldiers and the Sri Lanka Police, according to LTTE sources.

Farmer hacked to death: July 2 - A 40-year-old farmer Kanakapathipillai Puyalapulle was hacked to death reportedly by LTTE cadres at a village under their control in the Batticaloa district on 1 July, Thursday night. His 35-year-old wife Sinnathamby Pakyam had managed to escape, according to a senior army officer said. Attackers had inflicted severe injuries on her but reached the army-held area after hiding in Tiger territory overnight.

They were attacked as they entered the LTTE-controlled area. "They are residents of Mawadiwembu near Sittandi," the official said, claiming they were targeted as they were identified as Karuna loyalists. The LTTE had previously warned Karuna loyalists that they wouldn't be spared unless they surrendered voluntarily. Since Karuna quit the LTTE, an undisclosed number of killings have taken place between the two factions.

Devananda helps Karuna: July 4 - The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) leader and cabinet minister Douglas Devananda has openly stepped out to help 'Col. Karuna', the renegade eastern regional military wing leader of the Tamil Tigers "enter the political mainstream".

Devananda has defended his moves to encourage Karuna to "join the political mainstream", and admitted that he was the main advisor to the one-time Tiger leader. Devananda said he was helping Karuna "with national interests in mind" and was not advising him to return to war or fighting against the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, but only to join the 'political mainstream'. He said that Karuna's group would register as a political party soon after the provincial council elections. He said all documentation had been prepared for the registration of the party.

"It is not only Karuna, but even if any other LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) leaders want to join the political mainstream I would help them," he said.

LTTE political official shot: July 5 - An official of the political division of the Liberation Tigers was shot and wounded by unidentified gunmen in Batticaloa town on 5 July, Monday morning around 9.15 a.m. The gunmen shot Mr. 'Senathy', LTTE's political division head for Batticaloa town and its environs at the busy Arasadi Junction while he was riding a motorbike with a colleague who was also injured. Mr. Senathy was rushed to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital. Mr.Senathi's condition was described as serious by hospital sources.

"The Arasady Junction is surrounded by four high security Sri Lanka Police camps, including the office of the Superintendent of Police for the Batticaloa district. There is a Police camp in the

Public Library building at Arasadi Junction. Therefore the gunmen could not have been there without the collusion of a section of the Sri Lankan military," an LTTE official in the eastern town charged.

'Mr. Senathy received three gunshot wounds. His colleague has a gunshot injury on his hand", Batticaloa hospital told TamilNet.

LTTE activist shot dead: July 5 - A political division cadre of the Liberation Tigers was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Vanthaarumoolai, about 20 kilometres north of Batticaloa, July 5, Monday morning around 10 a.m. A person who was riding with him on a motorbike was wounded in the attack. He was rushed to the hospital. Residents said that the body of the dead LTTE political activist was lying on the Batticaloa- Valaichenai main road which is regularly patrolled by the Sri Lanka army. The incident took place between Sri Lanka army camps at the Kaluwankerni Junction and Vembu, residents said.

The deceased has been identified as an LTTE member named RAVI (32) alias MURINJI of Ampara, and the wounded person has been identified as an LTTE member named ISWARAN (37) of Hospital Road, Sandiliveli. The LTTE has blamed the Karuna faction of being responsible for the shooting.

Six arrested in Halo Trust attack: July 5 - Six ex-Halo Trust employees, including an alleged former LTTE cadre, had been arrested in connection with their involvement in the recent attack on the British mine clearing agency in Jaffna. A senior police investigator said there was no doubt they were involved in the attack.

The attack is the first on a foreign NGO operating in the north and east since the launch of an intensified campaign to clear the region, particularly Jaffna, of mines. The agency's administrator Ms. Linda Kumnova recently said they were not aware of the identity of the hooded-men who targeted the agency's vehicles parked at their Nallur vehicle park. "They caused heavy damages," she said, adding the total damage was estimated at around US $ 50,000. "At this point it is impossible to say as to who the perpetrators might have been, however two groups are currently under suspicion. They knew exactly what they were doing and we are sure that this is not the first time they were involved in this kind of operation," the Halo Trust said in a statement.

Population growth drops: July 5 - Sri Lanka's annual population growth rate has decreased to 1.4 percent during the past few years. "Population growth rate was at its peak between the years 1946-63 and is reducing since then. The lowest growth rate was recorded during 1971-2000 period," Director, Population Section, Ministry of Health, Dr. A. P. T. L. Abeykoon told a press conference held by the Health Education Bureau.

He noted the increase in population was due to the reduction in the annual death rate. "The healthy decrease in the annual growth rate was due to the awareness of birth control methods and reproductive health," he said. The decreased annual growth rate will result in the downward trend in population of children below age 5. Dr. Abeykoon pointed out that 270,000 youth were added to the labour force annually while only 120,000 workers retired. "Annually 150,000 youths join the unemployed," Dr. Abeykoon said.

LTTE's warning on killings in the East: July 5 – "Once more, fully aware of our people's desire for peace, we emphasise our continued commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding. We also want to express in no uncertain terms that if war is thrust on us, we are prepared to respond," said a press release issued by the LTTE's Political Division of Batticaloa-Amparai, following two shooting incidents in Batticaloa on July 5.

The press release said, "On 5 July 9.15am Batticaloa Town Head of Political Wing, Mr.Senathirajah and Mr.Nilan were shot by unknown gunmen using handguns while they were riding a motorbike through Sri Lanka Army controlled Arasady Junction. Both have been admitted to the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital and are being treated.

"Around 10am, in another shooting incident near Vantharumoolai Catholic Church, LTTE cadre Murinchan was killed and LTTE fighter Rosan was injured. Both were riding in a motorbike from Sittandy to Chenkalady when gunmen following in another motorbike shot at the LTTE cadres from behind. Rosan is receiving treatment for his gunshot wounds. Both incidents took place in SLA controlled areas.

"We have told the SLA officers several times during phone converstions and during discussions that stopping killings in the east is in SLA's hands. SLA has clearly ignored our notices. The killings clearly indicate that Security Forces are intent on undermining the MoU and are creating conditions for war. The actions of Security Forces are gross violations of the CeaseFire Agreement and we condemn these actions."

Suicide bomb attack in Colombo: July 7 - A woman suicide bomber who was on a mission to assassinate EPDP leader and cabinet Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda exploded herself killing four police officers when she was to be subjected to a body check in the Kollupitya Police station the morning around 11 a.m. on 7 July. The Kollupitya Police Station is located in the heart of the Colombo city next to the Prime Minister's official residence "Temple Trees", and not very far from Devananda's Ministry office.

Police said the alleged woman suicide bomber was taken into to custody in front of the office of Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda on suspicion. She was immediately taken to Kollupitya Police Station for investigation. When she was about to be body-searched she triggered the explosive device attached to a jacket packed with explosives killing herself and four police officers and injuring 12 others in the Kollupitya Police Station. Among the injured were two civilians and the others were police officers. Bomb blast had caused severe damage to the Kollupitya Police Station, security officials said.

Police said its initial investigation revealed that the woman had gone to ministry office to see Minister Mr. Douglas Devananda. She was not allowed to meet the Minister when she refused to be body-searched by the security personnel.

Suicide attack not to affect peace process: July 7 - The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), a major constituent in the ruling United Peoples Freedom Alliance government said in a statement issued on 7 July that the suicide bomb blast in the Kollupitya police station in Colombo would not cause any adverse impact on the peace process and the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. The General Secretary of the SLFP Mr.Maithiripala Sirisena said in the statement that the suicide bomber had targeted Minister Douglas Devananda. But the peace process and the ceasefire implementation would go on as usual. The UPFA government has committed itself to take forward the peace process, the statement further said.

Four police officers including the Chief Inspector of Kollupitya Police were killed when a woman suicide bomber blew up herself after failing in her attempt to blow up Mr Devananda.

Tigers deny suicide attack: July 8 - The Liberation Tigers

denied any involvement in the suicide attack in Colombo on Wednesday, 7 July in which four Sri Lankan Police were killed. Mr. S. P Thamichelvan, head of the LTTE's political division reportedly told TamilNet on 8 July that the Tigers had "absolutely no connection in the suicide bombing in Colombo". "This is an act to destabilize the peace process. We suspect this has been carried out by elements that want to disrupt the peace process", Mr. Thamilchelvan said.

Grenade attack on Chief Priest: July 8 – Ninty-year-old, Venerable Lendigele Sudassi, Chief Incumbent of the Bodhirukkaharamaya Temple in Bubulla in Hingurakgoda was seriously injured in a grenade attack that took place on 8 July, Thursday around 7.30 p.m., police said. He was admitted to the Hingurakgoda hospital immediately and later transferred by helicopter to Colombo as his condition is reported critical.

Detectives said the old monk was ill and in bed watching a television programme when the grenade was lobbed into his room. Detectives said two novice monks who had gone to fetch a meal for the ailing prelate had reportedly seen two men in shorts running away from the scene. Police sources suspect that the Tamil Tigers were responsible for the attack on the monk for harbouring Karuna's men.

It is to be recalled that on a tip-off a special police team led by Inspector C.D.Madanayake had rushed to Bubulla two das earlier and arrested a group of Tamil youths in the Bodhirukkaharamaya Temple. Police also recovered three T-56 rifles, one T-84 rifle, three hand grenades, nine mobile phones and a stock of pharmaceutucals among other things. It is reported that the Police also seized a car and van in which the group had arrived to the Vihare, sources said.

Tigers execute two Karuna militants: July 9 - Two militants belonging to the Karuna group were publicly executed by the Liberation Tigers in Illupadichchenai in Batticaloa, according to TamilNet. Balasundaram Sritharan (23) and Thillaiampalam Suthanthirarajan were arrested earlier on suspicion of carrying out attacks on LTTE members and supporters in the east. The report alleged that they were captured with weapons and equipment supplied by the Sri Lanka Army (SLA).

Village official shot dead: July 9 - Unidentified gunmen Friday shot dead a village officer (Grama Sevaka) in Kalladi Uppodai, on the southern outskirts of Batticaloa town. Mr. Kunjithamby Sivarasa, 47, was killed at his home around 5.30 p.m. by two gunmen who came on motorbike, Police said. Mr. Sivarasa was the village officer for Karadiyanaaru in the LTTE controlled hinterland of the Batticaloa District.

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Police said the village officer was shot at point blank range four times. Five empty casings of 9 mm rounds were recovered from the scene of the murder, Police said.

LTTE opens human rights office: 10 July - LTTE opened a Human Rights Office in Kilinochchi which was declared open by its political wing leader S.P. Thamilselvan on 9 July. Speaking on the occasion he said that the LTTE leader Prabhakaran respected human rights more than other leaders in the country.

A committee was also formed headed by Rev Father M.S. Karunaharan and comprising TNA Batticaloa MP Joseph Pararajasingham, Attorney-at Law S. Sivapalan, Jaffna University Asst. Librarian Miss. S. Arulanandam and S. Malathi, to take action in respect of human rights violations in the North and East of the island. Many TNA parliamentaians also participated in the ceremony.

US intelligence team visits Northeast: July 11 - A top US military intelligence team visited the sprawling Sri Lankan armed forces base of Palaly-Kankesanthurai in Jaffna for high level discussions on security and defence issues, according reports from Colombo. The five member US military intelligence team reportedly inspected the Kankesanthurai naval harbour and the Palaly air force base on Friday, 9 July.

It is also learnt that the US military intelligence team had also visited Sri Lanka army camps in Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Batticaloa. Quoting senior military officers at the Palaly headquarters, reports from Colombo said that the US team had discussed the international support network of the Liberation Tigers, their electronic intelligence gathering capabilities, security of Sri Lanka's air fields and ports, weapons smuggling and other matters.

SLA returns lands to owners: July 11 - The Sri Lanka Army (SLA) after eight years of its occupation Sunday handed over a section of the agricultural land used for cultivation of subsidiary crops located in Nelliyady area in the Vadamarachchi division in Jaffna district to their owners in the presence of representatives of Nelliyady Farmers Society led by its President Mr.S. Ratnasabapathy. SLA official T.Jayantha of 52-4 Brigade located in the area participated in the event which took place on 11 July. Nelliady is a residential town located 25km northeast of Jaffna town and about 5km southwest of Point Pedro.

The released agricultural plots of land were in the occupation of the SLA since 1996 when Jaffna peninsula was brought under the control of SLA after a military offensive. The SLA established a camp and a sand bund for their security purposes in the said land. The sand bund built across the agricultural lands was removed later.

EPDP office attacked: July 12 - The office of the EPDP led by Doulas Devananda at Valachchenai was shot at by unknown gunmen who escaped when policemen who were on duty at the premises returned the fire. Nobody was hurt in the shooting. OIC Valachchenai police D.K. Dharmawardena said the attack took place at 4.30 p.m. on 10 July. Four spent cartridges were found at the spot. Police and the EPDP blamed the LTTE for the attack.

Tamil youth arrested with weapons: July 12 - Sri Lanka Police arrested four Tamil youth with weapons on July 10, Saturday night in a town near Colombo. One of them is from Batticaloa, Police said. They were travelling in a bus from Hatton to Colombo when Police who were on high security alert for the provincial polls, stopped it in Mulleriya for a routine security check. A T 56 assault rifle, 19 rounds of ammunition and three hand

grenades were found in the possession of the four youth, Police said. They also alleged that one suspect had in his possession a photograph he had taken with LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakkaran.

Mystery of missing persons: July 13 - Mr.Rajagopal Gajendran (18), a student of Nainativu Maha Vidiyalayam is reported missing since July 5, according to a complaint lodged with the Jaffna regional office of the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka (HRCSL) by his parents. Gajendran reportedly left Nainativu to Jaffna town accompanied by a teacher. Since then the boy has failed to return home. In another development the teacher who accompanied the student is also reported missing thereafter.

In the second complaint lodged at the HRCSL, Jaffna office, Mr. Krishnapillai Chandramohan (24) of Batticaloa who got married recently in Karaveddy in Jaffna district is reported missing after he left Jaffna on March 10 this year to report to his business establishment in Kilinochchi. But according to Kilinochchi sources Mr. Chandramohan had failed to report for work since he left to Jaffna, his relatives stated in their complaint.

Peace process in great crisis: July 13 – "The peace process is in great crisis. The Sri Lankan government should take constructive steps to stabilize the ceasefire. But a cabinet minister in the government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) is openly aiding 'Karuna' to attack us. The manner in which the GOSL and its armed forces are backing Karuna is jeopardising peace," said LTTE's political wing leader, Mr. S.P Thamilchelvan, speaking to the press after meeting Norway's ambassador to Sri Lanka in Kilinochchi.

Referring to the clause in the CFA which obliges Colombo to disarm paramilitaries and to move them out of the northeast, he said: "The Sri Lankan government is undermining the CFA by arming and deploying Karuna and his henchmen against us."

US$ 26 million for NE fishing: July 14 - The ailing fisheries sector of the north and east of Sri Lanka is likely to receive a shot in the arm, when international experts meet in Colombo to discuss ways to rehabilitate the industry with an anticipated infusion of US$ 26 million over the next three years.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) is to make a joint presentation of proposals to rehabilitate the region's fisheries sector, which will contribute significantly to the regional and national economies.

Among these proposals are projects focusing on the provision of immediate assistance to fishing communities in restoring a sustainable livelihood. A number of projects also focus on reassessment of marine resources and their production potential. Proposals will also deal with the rehabilitation of fisheries infrastructure on a priority basis with a view to making the sector more productive for fishermen. The rehabilitation of the north and east fisheries sector will contribute significantly towards consolidating the foundations of peace and development of the region. It is therefore hoped that donors and political authorities will strongly support these proposals as part of the global effort to create the conditions for long lasting peace in the country.

Wounded LTTE official dies: July 14 - Mr. Senathirajah, the head of the LTTE's political divison for Batticaloa town has succumbed to his injuries.. He was shot and wounded by gunmen suspected to be associates of renegade LTTE commaner 'Karuna' on 5 July. He was receiving treatment for his wounds in the intensive care unit of the Batticaloa hospital. He was buried in Thandiyadi Heroes Cemetary in the Batticaloa district on Wednesday, 14 July with the Tigers' usual military honours.

Australia not to lift ban on LTTE: July 14 - The Australian government has announced that it will not lift its ban on the LTTE, which it currently lists as a foreign terrorist organisation. The Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, replying to a question in the federal parliament, said, "The Australian government will not lift the ban on LTTE. The Australian government urges the parties to restart the peace process without further delay and to negotiate constructively towards a durable settlement that safeguards the interests of all Sri Lankans."

Karuna cadre killed, two injured: July 14 - The Liberation Tigers in Batticaloa said that a key associate of renegade commander 'Karuna' was killed in an ambush by one of their special jungle warfare units in Batticaloa Wednsday, 14 July. "We ambushed a small group of the paramilitary Karuna Group carrying small arms upon information provided by civilians. We recovered the body of a key person of the Karuna Group. A search is on to apprehend the others", TamilNet reported quoting an LTTE military official. The Karuna Group cadres were ambushed south of the road from Batticaloa to Polannaruwa and Colombo near Punanai, LTTE sources said. Two Karuna cadres were seriously injured in the ambush, the LTTE officer said.

Key Karuna associate shot dead in jail: July 15 - A key associate of the renegade commander was assassinated inside the Batticaloa prison in the early hours of the morning Thursday, 15 July. Police and army surrounded the prison as the gunman who shot dead "Satchi Master" and another associate of Karuna climbed the jail roof with his handgun and a grenade in an attempt to escape. He surrendered to Police in the presence of the ICRC and truce monitors later around 10.45 p.m. Two non-LTTE prisoners were wounded in the attack. The police have blamed the LTTE for masterminding the assassination within the prison.

Tigers had earlier charged that Satchi Master was acting as Karuna's spokesman from his prison cell under the name 'Maran' with connivance of the Sri Lankan military intelligence.

The Tigers sacked 'Satchi Master' (Mr. Kanapathipillai Mahendran) from their military in the Amparai district in 2002, accusing him of embezzling funds entrusted to him for purchasing supplies for their camps in the Kanjikudichcha Aaru jungles, according to a report in TamilNet. Soon after declaring that he was separating from the LTTE, the renegade regional leader 'Karuna' recalled 'Satchi Master' and made him military commander for the Amparai District. In March this year, police in Kattankudy, five kilometres south of Batticaloa arrested 'Satchi Master' and four of his men while travelling in a van with weapons and grenades. The four were remanded when they were produced in Batticaloa courts on 31 March 2004. As there is no bail for the illegal possession of dangerous weapons, their remand continued to be extended.

EPDP party paper burnt: July 15 - Copies of a Tamil weekly 'Thinamurasu", published in Colombo by Eelam Peoples Democratic Party (EPDP) were burnt in Jaffna by unidentified persons on Wednesday, 14 July, according to a complaint by the EPDP which blamed the LTTE for the incident.. EPDP sources said an unidentified group abducted a motorcycle courier transporting bundles of 'Thinamurasu' copies along the Jaffna-Point Pedro road to be distributed to agents. Later bundles of the paper were found burnt in a shrub jungle behind the Seguntha Hindu College in Kalviankadu, a suburb in Jaffna town. The motorcycle was found abandoned at the site, police said. Police officials rushed to the site on receipt of information and recovered the motorcycle and commenced an investigation into the incident.

Fishermen arrested with explosives: July 16 - Four fisher-

men accused of smuggling explosives were produced in the Jaffna court on Thursday, 15 July. Police told the court that the four were arrested at the CeyNor Jetty in Gurunagar in Jaffna, a coastal suburb of the northern town, with four 250 gram packets of TNT and four detonators. Police objected granting the fishermen bail as they had allegedly been found with explosives. The judge remanded the four fishermen until 19 July, pending further inquiries.

Dhanapala meets civil society leaders: July 16 - The delay in restarting peace talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Liberation Tigers is due the preparation of the agenda, said Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala, chairman of the GOSL peace secretariat, speaking to journalists at the conclusion of his visit to Batticaloa Friday, 16 July. Speaking to journalists after concluding meetings at the 23-3 Brigade Headquarters garrison in Batticaloa town, Dr Dhanapala said the situation in the east was bad after Karuna split from the LTTE and that there was concern that this could adversely affect the peace process. President Kumaratunga, however, remains committed to taking forward the peace process, he said.

What was promising was that the Tigers and the government are abiding by the cease fire agreement, he said adding no one took up the issue of LTTE renegade commander Karuna as a major problem during his meetings with civil society and religious leaders in Batticaloa. He said he was happy that the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission had told him that there no complaints of cease fire violations by Sri Lankan armed forces in Batticaloa. Dr.Dhanapala met the Bishop of Batticaloa, Rt. Rev. Kingsley Swampillai, the chief incumbent of the Hindu institution Ramakrishna Mission, Jeevanada Maharaj and the Government Agent for the eastern district, Mr. V. Shanmugam. He discussed the security situation in Batticaloa with senior officers of the Sri Lanka army, Police and Special Task Force.

India extends credit line to Lanka: July 16 - The Government of India has extended a special credit line with a value of US$250 million to Sri Lanka on request from President Chandrika Kumaratunga enabling Sri Lanka to import petroleum products from India, a statement from the President's Office said. The loan is repayable over a period of seven years and includes a one-year grace period. The statement further said that the Government of India has also offered highly concessional interest terms and that the Indian credit facility is expected to considerably ease the additional pressure on import prices. Further the exchange rate is expected to strengthen as a consequence of this Indian loan. The Ceylon Petroleum Corporation and IOC will begin using this Indian facility soon, the statement added.

Two Muttur Muslim traders shot dead: July 17 - Two traders in Muttur division in Trincomalee were shot around 8.30 p.m on Friday, 16 July, in Shafie Nagar village in Muttur in the government controlled area by unidentified gunmen. One died on the spot and the other succumbed to gunshot injuries in the Muttur district hospital later on admission, Muttur Police said.

Initial investigation revealed that both traders were Muslims and were shot when they were returning after their day business. The victims were later identified as Pakiarajah Sadeek (35) and Thahir Fahim (28). Muttur Police have strengthened the security of Muttur division following this incident and launched full-scale inquiry into the murders, security sources said.

Batti-Amparai TNA MPs meet Thamilchelvan: July 17 - Batticaloa-Amparai Tamil National Alliance parliamentarians met with LTTE Head of Political Wing, S.P.Thamilchelvan in the LTTE Peace Secretariat premises in Kilinochchi on Saturday, 17 July, and the focus of the discussions that ensued were matters related to currently prevailing security situation in Batticaloa district. Battocaloa parliamentarians Joseph Pararajasingham, P.Ariyanenthiran, T.Kanagasabai, S.Jeyanandamoorthy Ms K Thangeswari, Amparai MP K.Pathmanathan and others participated in the meeting. Batticaloa-Amparai LTTE Special Commander Ramesh and Batticaloa-Amparai LTTE Head of Political Wing, E.Kausalyan, who were taken to Kilinochchi by Sri Lanka Air Force helicopter, also joined Thamilchelvan in the discussions.

Japan gifts of medical supplies: July 19 - The Japanese Government has gifted medical equipment worth millions of dollars to develop the health care services in the northeast and more assistance is expected, spread throughout a three year period, Health Ministry said. A press release said the assistance would be provided to Jaffna, Mannar, Kilinochchi and other areas in the northeast along with Anuradhapura and Monaragala districts. The stock of equipment is worth 2,598,398 US dollars and is a gift from the Japanese Government and its people. Surgical equipment, premature infant unit and material for Intensive Care Units, field equipment for Family Health Officers and goods for use in preventive health care service are some of the items.

450-acres of land in HYZ returned: July 17 - The Sri Lanka Army (SLA) Saturday handed over 450 acres of paddy lands in Maravanpulo village, which come under the high security zone of Thenmaradchchi south division, to the Jaffna District Government Agent Mr.S.Pathmanathan. The handing over event took place Saturday, 17 July in a temporary shelter built for this purpose in Maravanpulo-Kollankirai area.

According to records maintained by the GA, SLA is currently occupying more than three thousand acres of paddy lands in this division for the last four years. The SLA officials handed over a section of paddy lands stating that the lands are free of mines. Two representatives of US demining group, which is assisting the SLA in locating and removing mines from the paddy lands, also participated in the event.

Two men shot in the east: July 20 - Two persons were shot by unidentified gunmen around 8.30 p.m. Tuesday, 20 July in Eravur, 16 kilometres north of Batticaloa town in the east of the island. Police said the two were left for dead by their assailants. Both survived the shooting with wounds, they said. One of the wounded was formerly a member of the LTTE, according to Eravur Police. The gunmen who got away after the shooting, came on bicycles and shot the two who were standing by the road in the Eravur Tamil division, Police said. The wounded men have been identified as Mr.Pakkiyarajah Gananathan, 35 and Mr. Thambinathan Devarajah 37. The gunmen shot the two with a T-56 assault rifle on Veerapathirar Kovil Street in Eravur Division 5.

EPDP local council chairman shot dead: July 21 – The Chairman of the Alaiyadivembu Pradhesiya Sabha (local council), Mr.Velayutham Raveendran(Kamalan), 33, of Quarry Road in Kalmunai, and a senior EPDP member in the east was shot dead around 2.05 p.m. Wednesday, 21 July, in Akkaraipattu town, 64 kilometres south of Batticaloa on Sri Lanka's southeastern coast. The EPDP frontliner was gunned down by two unidentified assailants at the Akkarapattu bus terminal while engaged in shramadana work with other volunteers, including his wife and father. The gunman who came on a motorbike shot the EPDP Chairman six times with a pistol. Akkarapattu police said they suspected the gunmen to be members of the LTTE pistol group. The two armed guards provided by the Sammanthurai police for his personal security could not act fast as the spot was crowded with more than 500 civilians and the assailants had escaped in their motorbike.

refugee action

Options

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Contact IOM from anywhere in the UK for more information on how to apply to return home. Translated Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and application forms are available on the website www.iomlondon.org

IOM London: Tel: 020 7233 0001 or Free phone 0800 783 2332 Fax: 020 7233 3001 e-mail: varrp@iomlondon.org
or come to the office at 21 Westminster Palace Gardens, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RR
(near St James's Park tube and Victoria station).

Contact Choices if you are in England or Wales and you are interested in exploring your options about staying in the UK or returning home. More information is available on the website www.refugee-action.org.uk

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3rd Floor, The Old Fire Station 150 Waterloo Road London SE1 8SB Tel: 020 7654 7700 Fax: 020 7401 3699	1 Tariff Street Manchester M1 2HF Tel: 0161 233 1200 or 0800 917 2719 (free from a landline) Fax: 0161 236 4285	Suite 7, Floor C, Josephs Well Hanover Walk Leeds LS3 1AB Tel: 0113 244 5345 Fax: 0113 243 5448	Muslim Community Resource Centre, Melbourne Centre, Melbourne Road Leicester LE2 0GU Tel: 0116 261 4846 Fax: 0116 251 1712

Contact NERS if you are in North East England and are interested in exploring your options about staying in the UK or returning home. More information is also available on the website www.refugee.org.uk

NERS: 3rd Floor, Forum House, The Forum, Wallsend High St, Tyne & Wear NE28 8LX
Tel: 0191 200 1199/1108 Fax: 0191 200 5929 e-mail: wallsend@refugee.org.uk

Contact Options if you are in Scotland and you are interested in exploring your options about staying in Scotland or returning home. More information is also available on the website www.ymcaglasgow.org

Options at YMCA Glasgow: 33 Petershill Drive, Glasgow G21 4QQ
Tel: 0141 557 2355 Fax: 0141 557 0874 e-mail: options@ymcaglasgow.org

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Jaffna Hindu parents seek for their son, Doctor, MB. BS., MRCS, 32, UK born, bride to be of similar profession. Tel: 0208 689 4979.

ABOUT PEOPLE AND EVENTS

OBITUARY

Mrs. NAGARATNAM PONNUDURAI *(Rtd. Teacher) of Velanai, resided at 74 Mayfield Road, Colomo; Beloved wife of late retired Principal Pandit Ambalavanar Ponnudurai and the eldest daughter of the reputed businessman of Akuressa, late Mr and Mrs Sinnathamby; Beloved sister of late Thangamma Nagarajah and Saraswathy (Rtd. Teacher); Beloved mother of Nageswary (Rtd. Teacher), Kalyanasundaram (Rtd. Teacher), Kamaladevi (Rtd. Teacher), Prof. Balasundarampillai (Professor of Geography and former Vice Chancellor of University of Jaffna), Dr. Vimalendran (Canada), Eng Balendran (Canada), Vimaladevi (Teacher, Canada), Eng Yogendran (UK), Raveendran (Accountant, UK), Puvanendran (Accountant, UK), Nirmaladevi (Chemist, Canada) and late Vatsaladevi; Beloved mother-in-law of . Thirunavukkarasu (Rtd. Accountant), . Parameswary (Rtd. Teacher), . Tharmalingam (Rtd. Teacher), Rajalakshmi (Rtd. Teacher), Mangayatkarasi (Accountant, Canada), Umaghandhi (Canada), Vijayakumar (Former Manager, Housing Authority Sri Lanka, Canada), Dr.Vanaja (UK), Anushiya (UK), Ranjinidevi (Accountant, UK) and Logaraj (Researcher - Microbiologist, Canada); Beloved grandmother of Nithy, Dr Vithiya; Janagan, Dr. Jayanthy, Muralitharan; Dr. Bhanu; Janarthanan, Dr. Suthakaran, Senthooran, Ganeshavarathan; Chanjithkumar, Gajanthakumar; Arthee, Vamanan; Anabbayan, Anchala, Hariharan; Arjun; and Naranee. Beloved great grandmother of Govindan and Guganeshan passed away on 29th June 2004. The last rites and cremation took place on 4th July 2004 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Tel: 94-11-2385224*

The members of the family in the UK request friends and relatives to join them in a special abisheham and pooja in her memory on 31st July 2004 at Arulmihu Meenakshi Sunthareswarar Temple 100-106 Haydon Road, Wimbledon SW19 1AW. between 10am and 1pm. Tel: 0208 768 3468 (Yogendran), 0208 656 8333 (Raveendran)

IN MEMORIAMS

In loving memory of **Mr. Justice Aiyadurai Sivanandan** on the third anniversary of his passing away on 25th July 2001

Greatly missed and fondly remembered by his loving wife Pushpavathy; children Sivaraman, Sri Lakshmanan and Umayal; daughters-in-law Bahirathy and Kumuthiny; grand children Aarabhi, Krishna, Akhilash and Kanna; sisters Pathmawathy Jayaseelan, Thilakavathy Wijayaratnam and Ankaiyatkanni Sivapiragasapillai.

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In loving memory of **Mrs Mangai Sivasampu** *on the fourteenth anniversary of her passing away on 2nd August 1990.*
Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her two sons.
- 15 Wolsey Way, Chessington, Surrey KT9 1XG.

FORTHCOMINGS EVENTS

Jul 31 *6.30 p.m. Carnatic Vocal Concert by* ***Padma Vibhushan Dr. Balamurali Krishna*** *at Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middx. For tickets Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608.*
Aug 1 *5.30 p.m. Carnatic Vocal Concert by Miss. Preetha Raghu , disciple of Smt Sivasakti Sivanesan of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, London and daughter of Mr. & Mrs Raghu Krishnamoorthy of Berkeley Court, Glentworth Street, London NW1 at Beck Theatre, Grange Road, Hayes, Middx. All are welcome.*
Aug 3 *Sankadakara Sathurthi; Aadi Chewai (3)*
Aug 4 *Feast of St. John Vianney*
Aug 6th *7.30 p.m.* ***&7th*** *6.30 p.m. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Summer School Finale at Watermans Art Centre Theatre, 40 High Street, Brentford, London TW8 0DS. Tickets: £ 7.50 at Bhavan. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608.*
Aug 6 *Feast of The Configuration of The Lord, Jesus Christ*
Aug 8 *Karthigai; Feast of St. Dominic*
Aug 10 *Aadi Chewai (4); Feast of St. Lawrence*
Aug 11 *Krishna Eekathasi; Feast of St. Clare*
Aug 13 *Pirathosam*
Aug 15 *Adi Amavasai; Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*
Aug 19 *Chathurthi; Feast of St. John Eudes*
Aug 21 *Shashti*
Aug 22 *Avani Sunday (1)*
Aug 25 *Avani Moolam*
Aug 26 *Sukkla Eekathasi*
Aug 27 *Varalakshmi Viratham; Pirathosam*
Aug 28th & 29th *3.30 to 4.30 p.m.- Lecture on* ***'The Influence of the Ramayana and Mahabharata'*** *by Sri Mathoor Krishnamurti, former Director of Bhavan, UK. at the Bhavan. All Welcome.*
Aug 28 *Feast of St. Augustine*
Aug 29 *Full Moon; Avani Sundau (2)*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couple on their recent wedding.

Nimalan*, son of Dr.& Mrs Gunasuntharam of 48 Leigham Avenue, Streatham, London SW16 2PZ and* ***Anusa,*** *daughter of late Prof. Sabanathan & Mrs Sabanathan of 2A The Knoll, Calverley, Leeds LS28 5FB on 4th July 2004 at Battersea Arts Centre, Grand Hall, Lavender Hill, London SW11.*

Skandadas*, son of Mr. & Mrs Ganeshalingam of 10 Rosemary Drive, Ilford, Essex IG4 5JD and* ***Kirubalini,*** *daughter of Dr. & Dr (Mrs) Sandrasegaram of 29 Larkspur Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS7 8RL on 4th July 2004 at Redbridge Town Hall, Ilford, Essex.*

Sonali, *daughter of Dr. Mahesh Shroff & Mrs Nayana Shroff and* ***Balaskandan,*** *son of late Mr. Vinasithamby Rasaratnam and Mrs Vimala Rasaratnam on 4th July 2004 at Wyndham Westborough Hotel, Westborough, Massachusetts, USA.*

ADVOCATE SINNATHAMBY PONNIAH

An appreciation

The death of Mr Ponniah occurred on the 21st of May 2004 at the age of 82, in Botswana where he was living with his wife Nageswary, daughter Ananthy and son-in-law Ishwaran since 1990. Mr Ponniah born in Valvetty had his early education at Chithambara College and Udupitty American Mission College in Jaffna and his secondary and tertiary education in Jaffna College, Vaddukoddai from where he graduated obtaining a University of London degree in English. He then proceeded to his Advocates Course in Colombo and passed out in 1952 obtaining a first division. Since taking oaths as an advocate he practiced for a short time in Colombo and then established a lucrative Civil practice in Jaffna from the mid fifties until he left Sri Lanka in 1990 because of the closure of the courts due to the ongoing war between the Tamil Tigers and the army.

My association with Mr Ponniah commenced in 1984 while I was serving as District Judge in Jaffna. I found him to be a man of high principles and integrity and a lawyer who strived his utmost to secure justice for his clients even whenever he had to appear 'Pro Bono' for poor litigants.

Service to the people was foremost in his life and Mr Ponniah was in the forefront of many a struggle to emancipate the conditions of the poor and the downtrodden in the Tamil Community. To mention a few he was amongst other right thinking people who were instrumental in opening the doors of the Hindu temples in particular Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple and Vallipuram Krishnan Temple for the so called depressed class in Jaffna.

He was also in the forefront to put an end to animal sacrifice that prevailed in some Hindu temples in Jaffna. Mr Ponniah together with Professor Nesiah and others did yeoman service to assist many upcountry Indian Tamils who were displaced due to the Land Reform policy of the then Government by providing them with food and shelter in the North.

He was one of those who played an active role in the fight against the discriminatory standardisation policy of the Government, which adversely affected the Tamil students. He was highly interested in the school education in Jaffna and was the secretary of Jaffna Parents Association. This body conducted a number of meetings and contributed towards university entrance examinations and standardisation.

Being member of the central committee of the Federal Party in the sixties he actively participated in the satyagraha campaign and published the book "SATYAGRAHA and Freedom Struggle" in English, which gained much publicity all over the world.

When a pamphlet 'This is the Truth' was published by the Government after the ethnic disturbances in 1983, in an effort to correct the shortcomings and errors in that pamphlet, he published a pamphlet 'The Truth Vs This is the Truth' in English.

Even at his late life he wrote a literacy poetic prose in Tamil "Mannil Nalla Vannam Vazalam". This literacy masterpiece earned him the title 'Kaviko' which incidentally was conferred on him as recently as 2003, by the University of Jaffna when he went to Jaffna to fulfil his cherished ambition to visit the place he was yearning to visit since he left in 1990. Tamil Nadu Government ordered and distributed hundreds of copies of this poetic prose to various libraries in Tamil Nadu.

Mr Ponniah leaves behind his beloved wife Nageswary

Ponniah, former Vice Principal of Chundikuli Girls College, Jaffna, his daughters Ananthy Ishwaran in Botswana, Dr Vasuki Kailainathan in New Zealand and Sivakamy Vanniasegaram in UK, his much loved grandchildren and his nephew Mahendran in Botswana. His son Dr Vakeesan predeceased him.

"May his soul rest in peace"

- V. Jegasothy
District Courts Judge

Thamarai Pooththa Thadaagam

The Lotus Pond blooms again

Sivasambo Sridas does it again! This time it is a pack of 3 CDs called "Maathangi" on the veena following his successful production of twin CDs on the flute in 2002. He is the only musician known to have recorded CDs on both veena and flute, a celestial musician!

The Lotus Pond blooms once again! The Lotus usually blooms with the rising sun and closes at night. The tragedy which befell the Eelam Tamils has not affected their inborn talent. They are like the lotus which grows in slushy environment yet remains untainted and beautiful within under all circumstances. The Lotus symbolises a man of wisdom who remains ever joyous unaffected by the world of sorrows and change, like lotus leaves which never get wet. It is the symbol of truth and auspiciousness. The arts and architecture in India and SriLanka portray lotus in decorative motifs.

Ceylon (SriLanka) was booming with music in the post war era with Master Class musicians from abroad performing regularly, numerous schools teaching music as part of the curriculum for all students and those with noteworthy talent specialising under private tutors. Parental encouragement was enormous and there was music in every household. Also it was the period of such stalwarts as M.S.Subulakshmi, G.N.Balasubramaniam, Madurai Mani Iyer, Dhandapani Desikar and Vasanthakokilam, who reigned through the cinema and gramophone records.

Then in 1956 the Sinhala/Tamil conflict erupted and continued unabated over the years. The Tamils were unwanted in their own land. The exodus began and many a professional left the country and found abode in countries such as the UK, U.S.A, Canada, European countries, Australia etc. They took their expertise along with their musical instruments. Such a professional was Sivasambo Sridas. He retired prematurely after having been in the Public Service for 26 years, ending as Director, Land use Policy Planning in the Ministry of Lands and Land Development. He settled down in Canada in 1984 and continued his music. There he teaches music and is actively involved with the Thamil Isai Kala Manram, especially as an examiner for the higher teachers grade 7 tiered Examinations.

He is an accomplished musician. He started with vocal music and soon specialised in flute and veena music. It was his home environment which had its influence on Sridas's music. His father Sivasambo was an amateur musician with a good voice and was a keen exponent of temple music and an active participant in musical drama in the twenties and thirties. His sister Gowri learnt the violin with vocal music and had advanced training from Maharajapuram Santhanam, during his tenure in the Jaffna Music Academy. Brother Sriharan plays the mridangam and veena. Sriharan has performed on the veena for Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, both Radio and TV. I recall with nostalgia when we performed together in the well famed Singapore Karnatic Orchestra in the 1980's.

Sridas was fascinated and inspired by the beautiful sounds from the flute and veena as demonstrated by Mali, Ramani, Emani Shankara Sastry, Chitti Babu and others when he listened to them over All India Radio. Sridas's formal training in flute started in Jaffna under his first Guru Sri Ariyanayagam. Then several years later his training was in veena under Srimathi Lalitha Bhai Sharmanna of Adyar. This was during the period when he was a student at Vivekananda College in Madras during 1955-57. Then Ramananthapuram Somasundaram, an established flautist and teacher in Colombo, taught him numerous Thyagaraja compositions. His participation and winning of the gold medal award in the All Ceylon Amateur Music competition in 1963 stirred him to further achievements in music and to-day he is a Super Grade Artiste both in flute and veena in Radio Ceylon (SLBC), where he performs during his visits to Colombo.

His inspiration and guidance came mainly from South Indian Masters Sangitha Kalanidhi N. Ramani and the late veena stalwarts Sangitha Kalanidhi Thanjavur K P Sivanandam and Sarada Sivanandam. His association with Ramani has lasted many decades and still continues.

His public performances have been numerous including in countries such as Canada, India, U. K, Netherlands, U.S.A, Japan, Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, apart from Sri Lanka.

In the Maathangi CD's Sridas has exhibited his mastery of the veena in thirty compositions from a wide range of composers: Thyagarajar, Papanasam Sivan, Patnam Subramaniya Iyer, Dhandapani Desikar and others - a sumptuous offering.

Of the three volumes, Volume 1 contains 7 compositions. The veena is melodious and expertly played. The percussions, mridangam by Prapancham Ravindran and ghatam by H Sivaramakrishnan are rhythmically in excellent reverberation specially in the Kalpana swarams. The highlight is the main composition, 'Swararaagasutha', in Sankaraparanam ragam. The ragam alapana is an expressive delineation, the ragamalika thanam is extensively expressed in six ragams with appropriate creativeness. The piece concludes with a very well executed 'thani' by the percussions. The composition, 'Manasa sancharare', the hit from the film Sankaraparanam finds pride of place. The CD concludes with evergreen top of the pops of the yesteryears, Thamarai Pooththa Thadaagam popularised by Dhandapani Desikar, which inspired the reviewer.

Volume 2 contains 11 compositions: 'Sarasasaamadhana' exemplifies a rhythmic rendition in Kapinarayani ragam and another Thyagaraja composition, his tribute to 'all ye great men', 'Endharo', the Pancharatna Kirtana in Sri Ragam, follows. A third Thyagaraja piece 'Kalikiyunde' in Keeravani ragam deserves men-

tion. The popular Thillana in Dhesh ragam by Lalgudi Jayaraman is played with appropriate bhavam. Similarly Purantharadaasar's 'Venkatasala nilayam' is expressed in Sindhu Bairavi in the bhavam it deserves. The philosophical content of Rajaji's ever popular "Kurai onrum illai" in Ragamaliga is well brought out. Papanasam Sivan's "Manmathaleelai" in Charukesi ragam, a golden oldie, is heard again. Desikar's 'Jagajanani' in Rathipathipriya ragam concludes the programme.

The ever popular 12 compositions contained in Volume 3 will continue to attract all music lovers. The three CDs are researched and programmed well. Much thought has gone into the selection of the compositions. These would appeal to the intelligentsia, especially the musical intelligence, listeners, students, teachers and music connoisseurs.

Having listened to Sridas's style of playing, more celestial, one is tempted to request him to produce another CD of 'Ambal' compositions highlighting the other Trinity Shyama Sastry.

The Lotus blooms again and this gives us hope! The expatriate Eelam Tamil musicians have the facilities and the means to produce and release tapes and CDs. They should aim to build up the musical archives, a national one, which is very much required now. The blooming of the Lotus will spread internationally thus enriching the national archives in Eelam.

- Siva Sivananthan

The CDs can be obtained from: 'Sri Lalithakalakhendhiram', 18 Rosscowan Crescent, Scarborough, Ont. M1W 1K6, Canada. Details of the CDs and sound clips are available on the website www.sridas.com

A Bibliographer's one-man crusade

The need for Bibliography

Books are the means through which a race conveys its culture, ideas, ideals, way of life, life values and accumulated wisdom of the ages from one generation to another- to its own people to the rest of the world.

The need for a National Bibliography- a systematic guide to the literature, history and culture of a land and its people- was recognised in Sri Lanka during the 19th century. The Publishers Act 1885 (Chapter 179) stipulated that a list of every printed book available in the country should be included in the Fifth Part of the Government Gazette. In 1949 Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) became a member state of the UNESCO and the need for a modernised Bibliography was further stressed.

In 1952 a sub committee was appointed to facilitate the compilation of a National Bibliography to meet international standards. It was decided that the University of Peradeniya was the most suitably placed institution for this venture. In 1962 the first volume of a National Bibliography was published from Peradeniya.

Subsequently the Government decided that the publication of a National Bibliography should come under the purview of the National Library services and the venue of its publication was changed to Colombo.

From the time the National Bibliography became the responsibility of the National Library services the publications were irregular, coding of books were not systematically carried out and its distribution was not uniform.

However Mr. H.I.A. Goonatillaka, Chief Librarian at Peradenniya University through his own efforts compiled a Bibliography of books in English. He published his work – "A Bibliography of Ceylon: A systematic guide to the Literature of the Land, people, their history and culture published in the western languages from the sixteenth century to the present day". This Bibliography of English books published in 5 volumes between 1970 and 1983 was highly commended and remains an international reference work on Sri Lankan Studies.

The Question of Tamil books

The Sri Lankan National Library Services Board continued to publish its own Bibliography which included Sinhalese, Tamil and English titles.

Although there have been about 8000 Tamil books by Sri Lankan authors to this date, only about 500 titles have found a place in the Bibliography compiled by the National Library Services. It may be that the publishers of Tamil books may be failing to send their publications to the Library Services Board. But many point out that even the books that were sent were not catalogued and processed as they do not have the manpower to undertake this work involving Tamil books.

Over the past two decades about 40% of all books by Sri Lankan writers in Tamil are published abroad – outside Sri Lanka. There is certainly an upsurge of Tamil writing over the last twenty years. The ethnic violence in the country, a war situation, and a mass exodus of people from Sri Lanka to all over the world – had given a new dimension to writing. Furthermore almost every family had a story or life experience to tell.

The relative economic prosperity of the west enabled the new writers to publish their work on their own, and their writing from outside their native country gave a different perspective to our national problems.

Such writing – some of them of a very high calibre – never found its way into the Bibliographies compiled by the Sri Lankan National Library Services. It is this shortfall of commission and omission that is being addressed by Mr. N. Selvarajah.

A One-man Crusade

Mr.N.Selvarajah's Noolthettam – a Bibliography of Tamil Books by Sri Lankan writers from home and abroad which has more that a thousand entries in its first volume could become the starting point of a National Eelam Tamil Library Bibliography or an Eelam Tamils Central Responsibility.

Mr.N.Selvarajah – a well known Librarian and Bibliographer began his career in 1976 as a librarian at Ramanathan College, Chunnakam in Sri Lanka. And then served as the Central Librarian for the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in the Jaffna District.

During 1981-82 he served for a year in Indonesia under the United Nations Development Programme, where he organised a Model Rural Community Library System for that country in the Village Marengmang near the provincial capital, Bandung, in the Island of Java.

In 1983 he became the Chief Librarian at the Evelyn Rutnam Institute for Inter-cultural studies affiliated to the Jaffna College. In 1990 he became an

advisor to the Department of Hindu Culture under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in Sri Lanka. Since 1991 Mr. Selvarajah is a consultant to the Jaffna Public Library.

Living in Britain for the last decade it was his unstinting effort – Love of his profession – and single mindedness – which produced the first volume of his Bibliography. His labour of love continues – a second volume containing a further thousand entries has been released recently.

It is time that Public Institutions, private financiers, or perhaps even the Government of Sri Lanka should step in and promote, finance, distribute, disperse and deposit this invaluable Bibliography which would be useful for generations to come.

In India every state has a scheme under which about 500-1000 books are purchased by the state from publishers for distribution to schools and public libraries. An introduction of such a scheme in Sri Lanka would be a tremendous boost to our writers to distribute their books.

- Dr. S.Thiyagarajah

Mr. Muthukumaru Mahalingam

A Tribute

'Innovative with ideas and aggressive in action' were the basic traits of Mr. Muthukumaru Mahalingam, son of Mr. & Mrs Muttuhumaru who was born in 1923 and passed away in Peradeniya on 20th March 2004.

He imbibed discipline from his family and his education at the renowned institution, Jaffna Hindu College made him courageous and outspoken. He had genuine compassion for the people suffering injustice and was ever ready to lend a helping hand to those in need without anticipating rewards for his goodwill. He had cultivated a large circle of friends, particularly in the field of politics and culture. He was highly involved in the activities of the Government Clerical Service Union along with his comrades T.B.Illangaratne, Krishna Vaikunthavasan, Nithiyanantha and Kandasamy. After an early retirement from government service in protest against the 'Sinhala only act of 1956', he involved himself in diverse activities for the benefit of the community. He played a significant role in the social and welfare organisations of Jaffna such as Jaffna Municipal Council Ratepayers Association, Board of Trustees of Iyanarkovilady Vinayakar Temple, Jaffna Hindu College Old Boys Association, Association of Government Servants Retired under Sinhala only Act etc.

The departure of my father is an irreparable loss to the family and the community.

M.Sivakumaran,
Republic of Seychelles.

Australian Newsletter

Australia is renowned for its tough policy on Asylum seekers and has in place a system of mandatory detention for all unauthorised arrivals into the country. Refugees, border security and unauthorised arrivals are volatile issues and elections are fought over such matters. Australia's Refugee Policy and Mandatory detention continue to receive criticism not just from within the country but also from outside. Nevertheless, Howard government has always defended them. But in an election year, government is beginning to soften its stance and it became obvious with a change of guard in Immigration. Thereafter, signs of softening on asylum seekers have been visibly on the rise. Latest is a scheme announced for those who currently hold a temporary protection visa. TPV holders could now apply to stay in the country on a permanent basis under mainstream migration visas - such as business, spouse or student visas - without leaving Australia. Previously, TPV holders had to apply for further protection visas and be found to still qualify for refugee status to avoid being sent home after three years and those sought mainstream visas had to leave the country first. TPV was introduced in 1999 to deter the increasing number of "asylum seekers" – particularly those arriving without proper documentation and usually by boat.

Arundhati Roy, the novelist who won the 1997 Booker Prize for her "The God of Small Things" has been nominated for the 2004 Sydney Peace prize. It is awarded for initiatives in eradicating injustices of hunger, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy etc. and notable recipients of this award in the past include UN's Mary Robinson and Palestinian activist Hanan Ashrawi. An artistic evening in support of the Sydney Sri Durgadevi Trust staged various cultural programmes including the one set in a traditional art form. Eelam Tamil Association in Victoria has launched its newsletter "Karthikai Poo".

Professor Eliezer Memorial Lecture on "The good and not-so good of human decision making" was delivered by Prof. Thomas Triggs of Monash University, a distinguished academic in Melbourne recently. Tamil Australian Friendship Society celebrated National Youth Festival with grand cultural activities and the noteworthy aspect was the fact that the event was organised by none other than the youth themselves. Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO) in Australia observes the month of July as Solace month reminiscent of July 1983. A range of activities are organised throughout this month in various parts of Australia.

- Sivasupramaniam Sitsabesan

Sri Lanka Railway Past-Employees Welfare Association UK

The Ninth Annual General meeting of the above association was held on 29th May 2004 at John Innes Youth Centre hall, Wimbledon and the following were elected office-bearers for 2004-2005. Mr. A. Manikkam-Patron, Mr. C. Kannuthurai-President, Mr. P. Gnananandan-Vice-President, Mr. M. Selvanayagam-Hon. Secretary, Mr. S.Saravanapavan-Hon. Asst. Secretary, Mr. N. Paratharajah- Hon. Treasurer, Mr. E. Soundranayagam- Editor, Mr. N.S.ThambyRajah, Mr. V. J. Connstantine, Mr. K. Paramanathan, Mr. M. Balasundram & Mrs P. Arulampalam – Committee members.

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